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PROFESSOR SALMOND, D.D., ABERDEEN.

THE TRUTH  
OF  
CHRISTIANITY

BY  
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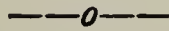
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# THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY



## CHAPTER I.

### CHRISTIANITY AND HEATHENISM.

Christianity at the End of the Second Century—Its Extent—Its Contrast with Heathenism—Character of Christianity—What a Convert to Christianity had to surrender—Completeness of the Change from Heathenism to Christianity—What were the Reasons which persuaded a Jew or a Heathen to become a Christian.

AT the end of the second century the life and the literature of the Christian Church were well known throughout the Roman Empire. In Asia Minor, in Egypt, in Africa, in Spain, Italy, and Greece, Christianity was known, and Christians were feared, hated, and persecuted, both by governor and by people. We can tell from contemporary evidence what the beliefs of Christians were, what manner of life they lived, and what were their relations to the customs, beliefs, and practices of the people among whom they dwelt. Take the words

of Tertullian, written about the year 198 A.D., and think of what they meant. In his *Apology*, chap. xxxvii., he says, "We are a people of yesterday, and yet we have filled every place belonging to you—cities, islands, castles, towns, assemblies, your very camp, your tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum. We leave you your temples only. We can count your armies : our numbers in a single province will be greater. For what war should we not be sufficient and ready, even though unequal in numbers, who so willingly are put to death, if it were not in this religion of ours more lawful to be slain than to slay" (*Apol.*, chap. xxxvii.). Again he says, "In whom have all the nations believed but in the Christ who is already come? The Parthians, the Medes, the Elamites, the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Armenia, Phrygia, Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, in Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya beyond Cyrene, inhabitants of Rome, Jews and proselytes believe in Him. This is the faith of the several tribes of the Getulians, the Moors, the Spaniards, and the various nations of Gaul ; the parts of Britain inaccessible to the Romans not subject to Jesus Christ, held the same faith, as do also the Sarmatians, the Dacians, the Germans, the Scythians, and many other nations in provinces and islands unknown to us, and which we must fail to enumerate" (Tertullian, *Adv. Judaeos*, chap. vii.). About fifty years before Tertullian wrote, Justin Martyr could say, "There is not a single race of men, barbarians, Greeks, or by whatever name they may be called, warlike or nomadic, homeless or dwelling in tents, or leading a pastoral life,



among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered in the name of Jesus the crucified, to the Father and Creator of all things" (Justin Martyr, *Dial. cum Trypho.*, chap. cxvii.). Irenæus says, "Such is the common faith and tradition of the churches of Germany, Iberia, and of the Celts, as well as of the East, of Egypt, of Libya, and of the centre of the world" (*Contra Haeres.*, Book I. chap. x. 2).

It is an historical fact, then, that at the close of the second century, in every province of the Roman Empire, and even beyond the Roman Empire, there were people called Christians, who held certain beliefs and led a peculiar life. They were not different in language or in race from the people among whom they dwelt. They spoke the language which their neighbours used, Latin or Greek or Syriac, according to the place where they resided. While the Christians mingled with their neighbours in the intercourse of common life, they were separated from the pagans in various ways. "We renounce," says Tertullian, "your spectacles, as much as the matters which gave rise to them, which we know to be conceived of superstition, in that we have got clear of the very things about which these performances were concerned. We have no concern in speaking, seeing, hearing, with the madness of the circus, with the cruelty of the arena, with the folly of the wrestling gallery" (*Apol.*, chap. xxxviii.).

Whether we consider the great number of Christians, or the separation between them and their neighbours, the facts in either case are re-

markable. In those days religious practices and observances were bound up with the political, social, and commercial life of the people. Every act, every transaction, had its religious aspect ; while, indeed, religious observances, for the most part, were mechanical and ceremonial, and did not mean much when practised, yet the neglect of them might mean something very serious. To bow before an anointed pillar might be done without thought, and simply as a matter of custom ; but to refuse such worship meant a deliberate purpose to break with the system of belief and practice in which a man lived and moved. " But lately, O blindness," says Arnobius, " I worshipped images produced from the furnace, gods made on anvils and by hammers, the bones of elephants, paintings, wreaths on aged trees : whenever I espied an anointed stone, and one bedaubed with olive oil, as if some power resided in it I worshipped it, I addressed myself to it, and begged blessings from a senseless stock " (*Adversus Gentes*, chap. i. 39).

These objects of worship met one at every turn, and no one might pass them without some sign of reverence. Universal custom sanctioned these tokens of adoration ; certain evil results were believed to follow on the neglect of them : add to this the fact that it was unheard of, unthought of by any people in these Western lands, for any one to change the religion of his fathers, or to change the ancestral customs of worship, and we shall readily see how great must have been those influences which constrained Christians to break away from the religions of the people to whom they belonged. They were

bound by their new faith to separate themselves from the beliefs, customs, practices of their nation ; to watch themselves lest by some habitual act, such as casting themselves prostrate before an anointed pillar, they should be unfaithful to their new Master ; and to guard every action and every word that they might keep themselves free from every taint of idolatry ; and to avoid the social customs and moods of life which in every fibre of it was filled with the spirit of the olden life which they had renounced. All this involved a strain of the most severe kind, a strain which could be endured only under the pressure of a conviction of the most thorough-going sort. Lay stress for the moment on the fact that to be a Christian meant an entire change of life and habit. It meant that all former ties were broken, that Christians could no longer mingle with their fellows as they were wont to do, that scarcely any social custom could be followed by them, for every social custom was accompanied by some observance which had a religious significance. The separation between Christian and heathen was thus most thorough and complete.

The characteristics of the new religion made it also a source of wonder and reproach to the heathen. The simplicity of the Christian worship was remarkable. There was no altar, no sacrifice, no temple. It was without a ritual and had no ceremonial. There was no priest and no incense. In Jewish and in Pagan religions there were endless sacrifices, ceremonies, altars, and many priests. With the exception of the Synagogue worship up to the destruction of Jerusalem, and with the exception of

the Jewish worship after the destruction of Jerusalem, there was no other religion at the time marked by a similar absence of ritual or ceremonial. The Invisible God was worshipped without any symbolic aid. There were praise and prayer and the reading of the sacred books, and exhortation. The elaborate ritual of the Christian Church was the work of future ages. Up to the beginning of the fourth century there was little or no ritual, and there was no temple. So wide was the departure of Christianity from the ordinary notions and practices of religion, that the Pagan people could not think of it as a religion in any sense of the word. To them Christianity was atheism. They could recognise only material gods, who could be seen or at all events represented in bodily fashion. A purely spiritual God, to be worshipped only in spirit and in truth, was to them inconceivable. To them, therefore, Christianity was an irritation and an offence. It vexed them and made them angry, and persecutions arose.

The point on which we lay stress at present is the greatness of the change which passed over a man when he became a Christian. How many things he had to surrender, and how many new habits he had to form, when he became a follower of Christ. How many ties were broken we need not say. All that made life precious to the ordinary man ; old customs sanctioned by the usage of many generations ; habits which lay at the foundation of individual, social, and city life ; hopes and aspirations which were bound up with every outlook into the future ; and the bonds which held humanity



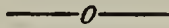
together, seemed to be dissolved at the touch of the new faith, and to fall into ruin at its touch. Need we wonder that the common man resented the injury done to him and his habits of thought and action, and fiercely accused the Christians of disrespect to the gods and of treason to the State? Was not that man an atheist who neglected, nay, who denounced, the ancestral custom of paying respect to the Lares and Penates whenever he returned to his house ; who did not set apart at the family meal the portion of food and drink formerly devoted to the spirits of his ancestors ; who no longer poured libations, or offered sacrifices ; who disregarded omens, and made no further bargains with the gods? In these, and in a thousand other ways, Christians disregarded the customs they had previously observed ; and thus the feelings of the heathen were outraged.

We need not press further the magnitude of the change, or insist further on the greatness of the contrast between Christianity and heathenism. For in every way the contrast was great. In belief and in conduct, in doctrine, morality, worship, the contrast was unspeakable. And men had passed from the one to the other. They had become Christians. Why? What led these Greeks, Romans, Syrians, Egyptians, and other races to break with all the beliefs, habits, and customs of their fathers? What led them to put off the manner of life to which they were accustomed, to change their attitude toward the unseen world, towards their fellow-men, and towards themselves? What led them to love what once they hated, and hate what once they loved?



Some reasons they must have had. At present we do not inquire into the truth or adequacy of these causes of change : we simply call attention to the fact that for such a thorough change of aim, purpose, and method of living, some explanation must be forthcoming. That Christianity turned men from idols to the service of the Living God is written broadly in the pages of history, and, indeed, is not denied by those who have a competent knowledge of the facts. The pages of the Apologists of Early Christianity, from Aristides down to Augustine, abound with descriptions of the Christian doctrine, worship, and morality, and also of pagan beliefs and practices. It is not possible to transcribe them here. We refer to them in order to show where the evidence may be found which proves the position we have indicated. But in truth evidence is forthcoming from the Greek and Roman literature of the period. But we do not dwell on this. We set before us the contrast between Heathenism and Christianity. We recall the fact that the first Christians had been either Jews or Heathens. We ask, How and why did they become Christians? For they really did become Christians. A Jew gave up all that made life precious to him, his exclusive privileges, his pride in his ancestors, the esteem of his kinsmen, when he became a follower of the Crucified One. A Greek also gave up all that had made life valuable from a Greek point of view; and for a Roman to become a follower of a despised and crucified Jew involved a depth and fervour of conviction which can scarcely be expressed. Of the strength of the belief that constrained them to be

Christians there can be no doubt. But what about the truth of the belief? Were these people right? Was Christianity worth the sacrifice which they made for it? Did it give them a fuller and more complete view of the mysteries of life, and a more adequate account of the pain and misery, as well as of the gladness and hope, of humanity? Did it supply a more cogent motive for human endeavour? Did it give a more adequate ideal of what human life ought to be, and strength to realise it in character and conduct? Christians made answer that it did all this and more; and to-day they appeal to history to make their statement good. They claim that Christianity sets forth the only adequate theory of human life, and they claim also that it alone provides the means by which human life may become what it ought to be.



## CHAPTER II.

### PRESUPPOSITIONS OF CHRISTIANITY.

Christianity a Religion of Redemption—Assumptions made by Christianity—Christianity began in Palestine—What were the Ideas of God, of Man, and of the World among the Jews four hundred years before the Coming of Christ—These contrasted with those of Greece and Rome—Remarkable Character of the Contrast.

THE question of the truth of Christianity is closely interwoven with the question of how it came to be. As it manifested itself to those to whom it came in its

earliest form, it made certain assumptions and certain presuppositions. It assumed that there were sin and misery in the world, that redemption was needed by man. Its chief characteristic was that it was a message of salvation to sinners. It was a proclamation of mercy, an authoritative command to sinners to repent, and an authoritative statement that in Jesus Christ and in Him alone salvation was to be found by men. It professed to show how bad men could be made good, and how sinners could be changed into saints. The fundamental assumption was that man needed redemption, and the chief message of Christianity was that in Jesus Christ men had found a saviour. While it has to be shown that Christianity is in harmony with all truth, that its teaching with regard to God and man and the world is in agreement with all that science can reach, and all that philosophy can set forth, it must always be remembered that Christianity is in the first place a religion of redemption. Its aim and purpose are mainly practical. It reveals the way of pardon for sin, of reconciliation with God, of purity and holiness for men. If we should ever lose this point of view, we should miss the first and greatest and most essential note of Christianity. All its teaching is dominated by the great fact of redemption.

Bearing this in mind through all these pages, it has also to be remembered that the work of redemption must be based on truth, and that the doctrines of Christianity must be in essential harmony with truth otherwise discovered. They are not inconsistent with reason, nor in contradiction with science.

On the contrary, it may be shown that the truths of reason and science become more luminous when they are seen in the light cast on them by the fundamental truths of Christianity. But our main inquiry in the present chapter is, What are the main assumptions with regard to God and man and the world which Christianity made, and how are these justified? Christianity made itself manifest in one country of the world, and at a certain time in the history of man. It began in Palestine, and, from Jerusalem as a centre, went forth into all the earth. The natural historical inquiry is, What were the beliefs, history, and character of the people among whom it began, and how did their history prepare for the origin of this great historic faith? Happily it is a question which can be answered. We have in our hands the literature of Israel, and we know what Israel believed, and what they hoped for. For our purpose it is not necessary to discuss the questions which arise and are keenly agitated at the present hour with regard to the history and literature of the Jews. They are of the highest interest and of the greatest importance. But it is not necessary to say anything as to the methods and results of the Higher Criticism in this place. For whether we look at the recorded history as we find it in the Old Testament books, as the outcome of a long process of literary labour pursued from age to age, until we find the books in their present form in the hands of Ezra, or adhere to the traditional view,—in either event, the result for our purpose is the same.

The teaching of the books of the Old Testament



remains, whatever be the process by which that doctrine came to be. At least four centuries before the Christian era, the Jews were in the possession of certain books—books which are still in our hands. We may read them, and may understand them. What do we find in them? We find certain views of God and man and the world which we find nowhere else in the literature of the time. We can make this assertion with the greater confidence, inasmuch as the religious literature of the world is more widely and also more accurately known than it has been in any former age. We know the beliefs of the other nations of the earth at the time when the Pentateuch was in the hands of the Jews, when also the lofty strains of the second Isaiah comforted and sustained the exiles in Babylon. We know that while other nations believed in many gods, and had not attained to a belief in the Unity of the Unseen, Israel believed in One God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the only source of power, of order, of righteousness in the universe. No other nation had this belief at the time.

Greece in its popular beliefs beheld divine beings in every stream and in every tree, peopled earth and sea and sky with gods and goddesses innumerable. In their Olympian system, they had not attained to any thought of the Divine Unity; and above all, for them the gods were not eternal. They had a beginning and might have an end. When their best and wisest men grappled with the problems of life and duty, and sought, with a subtlety never surpassed, to read the secret of the universe, they could reach only the dead abstraction of being



in general, or that of a self-thinking thought which could enter into no relation with the universe. In Persia, although they had somehow reached the great thought embodied in the conception of Ahura-mazda, yet they did not hold fast to it for any time, and soon sunk down to the belief in dualism, in which good and evil were represented by two powers, neither of which was able to control or subdue the other. Nor were the other peoples further advanced in this respect. Nay, the highest thought of the ancient world with regard to the Unseen was reached by India, Greece, and Persia ; but it is strange to think that their highest and truest thoughts were far surpassed by a small people in Palestine. The Jews were not distinguished for literary power, or by abstract thought. They were not a people given to speculation, they did not think much on the nature of things, nor did they seek to discuss causes. They were a practical people, yet it was to them that the great thought of the unity of God came, and it is owing to their influence that Monotheism has become the dominant creed of humanity.

We may trace the steps by which Greece and Rome came to the conception which they obtained of the unity of the universe and of the unity of God. We can read the literature and the philosophy of Greece, and trace the progress of the thought of Greece from rude beginnings to its highest culmination. From the outset Greece is in search of unity. The Greeks sought it first in physical elements, and they could not find it in them. They sought it in the power of thought, and from one step to another they proceeded until in Plato they came to

the thought of being as the common element which everything possessed. Everything had being, and this mere abstraction without reality became the highest principle of philosophy. Even when they had reached this thought, it did not help the Greeks very much. For they had still to explain how this being, which had no difference in itself, could give rise to so many distinct and separate beings, and to the kinds of beings in the universe.

We find also that Aristotle, the greatest thinker of Greece, was not able to arrive at clear and worthy thoughts of God, or of man, or of the world. He did say some very remarkable things about God. He spoke of God as the thought which could think itself. But the God of Aristotle was a God who was occupied with himself, who cared only about himself, and who had no thought of man or of the world. The world might long for him and strive after him ; men might stretch hands of longing after God ; but the God of Aristotle neither knew nor cared for the strivings and aspirations of men. He was so far above the world, so far removed from it, that he could have no contact with it.

It is not necessary to speak much of the later movements of Greek thought, nor to dwell on the Stoic identification of God and the world. For the most part they spoke of God as the soul of the world, and could not distinguish between God and the world. Thus the highest Greek thought about God was either an empty abstraction termed being, or a God who was occupied with himself, or a God who was the living, moving principle of the world, and who was nothing apart from the world.

When we look at that aspect of Greek thought, which was religious, we find that religiously the Greek had not arrived at any notion of God which could satisfy the religious aspirations of men. Taken at its highest, the Greek religious view of God was in many respects defective. At no time did the Greeks attain to a true idea of God as the Maker and Governor of the world, far less did they think of Him as the Redeemer of the world. There were too many, there were indeed innumerable forms of the Divine; and the people generally had not risen to the thought of the unity of God, nor had they any true thought of His ethical character.

As for Rome and Roman religious thought, we need not say much. What we need to say is merely to point out how Rome came to such a sense of the Divine unity as we find in her greatest thinkers. Rome's greatest intellectual achievement is in her system of law and government, and her greatest thought is thus set forth by Cicero: "The universe forms an immeasurable commonwealth and city—common alike to Gods and mortals; and as in earthly states certain particular laws, which we shall hereafter describe, give the particular relationship of kindred tribes: so in the nature of things doth an universal law far more magnificent and resplendent regulate the affairs of that universal city where Gods and men compose one vast association" (*De Legibus*, i. 7).

From small beginnings Rome went on conquering and to conquer, until she became the greatest empire that the world had known; other states and cities became subject to her; her progress raised

many political and many religious questions. When at length the empire was firmly established, the religious question became practical. The tribal gods of her early history had become dwarfed by the magnificence of the new dominion. The gods whom the fathers worshipped while the city of Rome was co-extensive with the Roman dominion seemed out of all proportion, and utterly inadequate in the presence of Rome's great empire. The visible had outgrown their idea of the unseen powers ; and the outcome of the Roman evolution of religion was to elevate the reigning emperor to the throne left vacant by the deities whom the Roman life had outgrown. Emperor worship became the recognised religion of the Roman empire.

Such, very briefly, was the outcome of Greek and Roman civilisation from a religious point of view. Much might be said of the forms, customs, and rites of religion as practised by the various peoples at the beginning of the Christian era ; much also of their beliefs and superstitions, and of their moral condition. But these must be merely referred to and not dwelt upon.

Observe the contrast, then, between the Hebrew people and the other peoples of the world in the ages immediately before Christianity began. The Hebrews believed in One God, the Maker of heaven and earth. They believed in His holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. He is the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, abundant in goodness and truth. They believe in His constancy and unchangeableness, in His inflexible purpose, and in His gracious love. God was the Maker, Upholder,

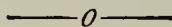


Ruler, Judge, Redeemer of the world. His pure ethical character is as conspicuous in the Scriptures as are His omnipotence, His wisdom, and His knowledge. It is not necessary to dwell on the conception of God embodied in the Old Testament. It is quite familiar and well known.

Also the Hebrews had a unique conception of man. The unity of the human race is assumed at the outset, and insisted on throughout. The ethical and spiritual worth of humanity is also apparent everywhere in that wonderful literature. But the most unique and singular characteristic of the view of man set forth in the Old Testament is seen in the description of his relation to God. He is made in the image of God, capable of knowing, serving, and worshipping God. He is in fact made for God, and has not attained to the end and purpose of his being. Man has become a sinner. This is the Scriptural explanation of the woe and misery and wretchedness of man in all the periods of his history. Scientifically considered, the fact of sin, in the Scripture meaning of the word, does explain the failure of the ancient civilisations, the constant tendency of man towards degeneration, and the ever-recurring descent of man towards a lower ethical and spiritual condition. The Scripture view is that man is helpless without God, that he needs God, and, apart from God, cannot maintain himself in uprightness, far less can he recover himself when he has fallen. Man, as an individual or as a society, cannot attain to his worth, cannot realise his true ideal, unless he is reconciled to God, and also is in constant fellowship with God.



Thus in respect of the idea of God, and of man, and of the relation between man and God, the Hebrews had come to thoughts peculiar to themselves, thoughts found nowhere else; and these thoughts have commended themselves to the wisest, purest, best races of mankind. Are we not warranted in saying that they had not reached these thoughts by any wisdom, insight, power of their own? These thoughts about God and man were given to them. They thought rightly about God, because God had manifested Himself to them, and had spoken to them words which they could understand.



### CHAPTER III.

#### CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM.

The Old Testament as understood by the Jews—The Messianic Hope as set forth in the Old Testament, and as current among the Jews—The Jewish and the Christian Messiah—Contrast between them with respect both to the Earthly and the Heavenly Ministry of our Lord — Strauss, Baur, and Professor Estlin Carpenter—The Suffering Saviour—The Messiah of the New Testament quite different from the Messiah expected by the Jews.

It was among a people thus trained through a long providential history, whose mental habit was familiar with the lofty thoughts about God and man and the world contained in the Old Testament, that the Christian religion arose. The Founder of Christi-

anity could assume the teaching of the Scriptures, and make it the foundation of a further revelation of God. He could take for granted what the Scriptures taught about God, and could speak of the Father to a people who already had some notion of the Fatherhood of God. The Father in heaven was so far known. That the Maker of the world was not indifferent to the world, that He cared for all, even for the grass of the field, for the living creatures of the earth, and that He cared for man,—these were truths which Jesus had not to demonstrate, but only to set forth with greater fulness and with more detail. One part of His work was to re-state those truths which had been neglected, or obscured, or retained by the traditions of men, and to set forth in clearer light the great ethical and spiritual truths of the Old Testament, which had fallen into the background owing to their lack of ethical and spiritual insight. For men, even the men of the race to whom revelation had come, had laid hold of revelation mainly by its external side. They had grasped the accessories, what we may even call the accidents, of revelation, and had let the reality go. The external commands, the ritual, the ceremonial, they had cherished, and had added to them, and developed them, until they were lost in the mass of traditional observances. God had been removed to a distance, man had come to be looked at merely as a means for the glorifying of the law, and ethical and spiritual truth had been attenuated until it had almost vanished.

The expectation and the hope of the Old Testament had also suffered a great change, and had sunk to a

low level. The great form of the Messiah, which in type and symbol had been shadowed forth in the Old Testament, which, in psalm and prophecy and history, occupies so large a place, had been transformed into a likeness of a mere worldly monarch. There were Messianic expectations current in the time when Jesus came, but they were of a kind suited to the imagination and desire of a people who had turned the ethical and spiritual truths of a great revelation into the treadmill of minute and meaningless observances. No doubt the Jews did long with passionate expectation for the coming of the Messiah; but the kind of Messiah they longed for was one who presented the features of a Jew, and shared his expectations. What the Jews desired most of all was freedom from the Roman yoke, power to govern themselves, and also the dominion over the nations which they thought were promised to the seed of Abraham. It may be safely said that no Jew desired—no Jew of the time of our Lord—ever thought of a Messiah of the kind actually realised in the character and work of our Lord. This remark is made because it is common in many quarters to speak of the Messianic hope as the moving impulse of the apostles, and as that which enabled them to shape the outline and mould the character of the Messiah in whom they believed and whom they preached. Many speak as if the Church had, under the influence of prepossession, and of fixed expectations of the Messiah, created the image which they adored. Their faith, it is said, made the facts, and there were few facts on which to base their faith.

Some plausibility might be given to this contention if it could be shown that the Messianic expectations of the Jews had any resemblance to the character of the Christ set forth in the New Testament, and believed in by the Christian Church. The one is in almost all respects a contrast to the other. While the Jews expected a Messiah who should restore the kingdom to Israel, who should rule the nation with a rod of iron, and have the Gentiles under his feet ; while they thought of his kingdom as everlasting, and his rule as in all respects favourable to the Jews, and certain to confer on them prosperity, glory, and blessedness irrespective of their moral conditions ; while they thought also of the Messiah as always set to rule and never set for service ; in all these aspects the actual Kingdom of Christ was quite different. The Kingdom of Christ was, no doubt, permanent and universal, and His dominion was to be an everlasting dominion. It was not, however, founded on mere power, but on grace and love. The foundation of it was laid in service, and His title to it was proven by His suffering and death, and attested by His resurrection and ascension. The Kingship of Christ was for service to the Father and to men.

It is quite true that the Christians found in the Old Testament notes and outlines of the Messiah which had been realised in Christ. But the Jews had not up to the time of Christ—and the disciples were in this respect also like their countrymen—identified the Messiah they expected with the Servant of the Lord, or with the suffering



Redeemer of His people. They dwelt exclusively on those pictures of the Messiah and His Kingdom which set forth their glory and their power, and allowed the prophecies which told of suffering and of service to sink into the background. A Messiah of the type of Jesus Christ they thought not of, they did not expect ; and certainly they did not desire such a Messiah.

While the Messiah of the kind fulfilled in Christ was certainly depicted in the Old Testament, yet as far as the Jews of the time of our Lord's earthly ministry are concerned, it might as well not have been there. It was thus altogether new to them—how new every attentive reader of the New Testament knows well. A Messiah, Who came to seek and to save the lost, Who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, Who came not to save or serve Himself but to serve and to save others, Who was to live the life of the poor, and the wearied, and the toiling, and die a death of pain and shame, was neither expected nor desired by the Jews. Nor did they think of Him as of one who went about doing good, healing the sick, helping the oppressed, and teaching truth to men ; nor had the Jews any thought of a Messiah who should submit Himself to merely human conditions, live a true human life, be sinless and stainless in His lowly lot, and rise to ethical perfection in the daily round of common life and work.

The newness and unexpectedness of the Messiah as realised in Christ appear also from other considerations. Having lived a life of obscurity for about thirty years, having exercised a ministry of



reconciliation in life and word and deed, having died on the Cross as a sacrifice for the sins of other people, it is recorded, and was most earnestly believed by His people, that He rose from the dead. He ascended, they believed, to the right hand of God; all power in heaven and on earth they believed was given to Him. What then was the conception which the Christian Church held as to the exercise of the power Christ wielded, and the kind of kingdom He possessed? His kingdom was a kingdom not of this world. It was a kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. The aim of the government of the exalted Saviour was still of the same kind as He had set forth in His earthly service. A statement of the Apostle Peter, uttered in the Jerusalem Church at an early date, makes this clear: "Him did God exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins" (Acts v. 31). The exalted Saviour still exercises a ministry of reconciliation; His power was in the service of His love, and the heavenly ministry was a continuation of the earthly.

This becomes even more clear when we think of the conception which the Church had with regard to the abiding relation between Christ and the world, and between Christ and His people. The exalted Saviour is an intercessor. He abideth a priest continually. The language of the New Testament becomes full of emotion, quivers with love, adoration, and reverence, as it speaks of Christ and His intercession. In the writers of the books of the New Testament the abiding relation of Christ to

His people was something unspeakably wonderful. The words of the Apostle of the Gentiles have a warmer glow when they touch on this topic. "It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. viii. 34, 35). The Epistle to the Hebrews dwells on this aspect also: "Who ever liveth to make intercession for us." John also is in harmony with the others. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John ii. 1, 2). To the early Christians, then, the Christ Who died for them ever liveth to make intercession for them, and their hearts were thrilled, their imaginations quickened, and their spirits were subdued to Him who loved them and gave Himself for them. They believed that Jesus had said to them, "Lo I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." And they were persuaded that this was true. The presence and the power of Christ seemed to them to be living and present. He could and did help and save and bless them. "The love of Christ constraineth us," seemed to them the motive power to a holy and a pure life. They lived as in His presence, and His approval was their highest reward.

This brief sketch of the New Testament idea of the Kingdom of God, and of the Christ is given, inasmuch as it is in striking contrast, in almost all its details, to the expectation current among the Jews. It has been contended by Baur and Strauss, and by

many both in Germany and at home, that, to use the words of Baur, "It was in the Messianic idea that the spiritual contents of Christianity were clothed upon with the concrete form in which it could enter on the historical development." Since Baur wrote these words, we have learned a good deal about the Messianic idea current among the Jews. We shall refer here only to Schürer's "The Jewish People in the time of Christ"; to Stanton's "The Jewish and the Christian Messiah"; and to Westcott's "Introduction to the Study of the Gospels." Many more books might be cited, but a reference to these is sufficient to show that the Christian idea as set forth in the New Testament has scarcely anything in common with the Jewish idea except the name. It is acknowledged on all hands that the idea of a suffering Saviour was foreign to the Jewish mind. It does not appear in apocalyptic literature, and yet Professor Estlin Carpenter in his book on "The First Three Gospels" says, "The Apostolic witness all centred round one great idea. Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. When He had passed away all reminiscence was steeped in this belief. By what processes His followers had arrived at this conviction need not now be examined. It is sufficient to observe that the recollections of His words and deeds were suffused with the glow of feeling which this faith excited. All memory palpitated with emotion, which could hardly fail to impart to imagination a certain quickening power. Under its stimulus the testimony even of eye-witnesses rose unconsciously to meet the high demand for a fit account of Messiah's work" (pp. 84-5).

Why should there be a high demand for a fit account of Messiah's work? This is what needs explanation, and no explanation is forthcoming on the part of Professor Carpenter. He is bound to show how this demand arose, and bound also to show how it was met. It is manifest that the Christian ideal did not meet the demand of the Jews, for though many Jews became Christians, the Jews as a people seemed to seek and find satisfaction in other ideals. The Messiahs they demanded and followed were of the type of Judas of Galilee, and of their leader in their final struggle with Rome, Bar Chocheba. To have accepted the Christian ideal would mean a thorough change of attitude, a complete revolution in their expectations. It meant to love what once they hated, and to hate what once they loved. But the Christians, Professor Carpenter would say, accepted the Messianic ideal of the New Testament. Yes. But in doing so, they forsook altogether the Jewish expectation, ceased to think of a temporal kingdom, and looked for a city which had foundations whose builder and maker is God. How a Messianic idea which thwarted and defeated popular demands can be said to meet that demand is not very apparent.

A calm survey of history leads us to the conclusion that the Messianic conception realised in the Christian books is the work of Jesus of Nazareth. The thought, "Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory," was unshared by any other in His time, and was not shared by any of His disciples until after the resurrection. In this, as in all else, the



origin of Christianity must be traced to the creative personality of the Lord Jesus Christ. We quote the words of one who is among our highest authorities on questions of this kind. No one can speak with more weight, for no man living has known the secret of Israel as well as he, and no one is better acquainted with the whole range of that marvellous history. Professor Davidson of Edinburgh has thus spoken : "The dimensions of this hope, however, among the Jews at the beginning of our era may very readily be overstated. It is doubtful, for instance, if there was any idea of a suffering Messiah. Again, it is certain that among Jews outside of Christianity a great Messianic development took place in the first century A.D. This may have been due to Christian influence and intercourse before the final schism between Judaism and Christianity. It is certain that the Christology of the New Testament was largely due to the teaching of Christ and reflection on His life, particularly the conception of the spiritual nature of His aims and His Kingdom. These points exclude that interpretation of the New Testament literature proposed by Strauss. . . . (1) The supernatural element in the Gospels being impossible, shows that the narrative arose long after the life of Jesus: they are mythical. (2) The *ideas* which have been clothed in history are the popular Messianic ideas of the time. The theory falls with the falsehood of the last assumption. No such developed circle of Messianic ideas can be shown to have existed before Christ" ("Chambers' Encyclopædia," art. Bible).



Along with the fall of Strauss' theory, many others fall. That any man, or any set of men, could have conceived the character of Christ, fashioned His teaching, sketched His life and the character of His kingdom, and could have given us the outline of His work and mission, and His influence in His exalted state, is a proposition which is the more surprising the more we think of it. The whole character of His power, work, aim, and purpose is so unlike anything else in the history of humanity that no one could have invented it. It is so great, so transcendent, so unlike anything otherwise conceived by man, that it must be real. Accept the New Testament account, and the story of Christ is intelligible; reject it, and we are wrapped in mystery and unintelligibility.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE GOSPELS.

Jesus wrote nothing—The Impression made by Him—His abiding Presence—Uniqueness of the Gospels—The Problem they had to solve, and how they have solved it—Other Ideas of Incarnation, and their failure—The Life of Jesus Christ—His Teaching—The depth of the Gospels, and their inexhaustible fulness.

IN this chapter we shall look at the Gospels and shall not inquire into the question of how they

NOTE.—For much of what is in this chapter I am indebted to a remarkable and suggestive book, the author of which I do not know. It is called "But How—if the Gospels are Historic," published by David Douglas, Edinburgh.

came to be. We cannot touch on many of the problems of the origin of the Gospels. They are very many and are very complex. Hundreds of the ablest men are working at them, and while some things are becoming clear, other things are more doubtful than before. It is clear for one thing that the Christian Church had been living, working, growing for some time before the Gospels took their present form. How long that time was we do not know. The people heard from the lips of Apostles and of men instructed by the Apostles the main facts of our Lord's life, and the main truths of His teaching; and on the words of the Apostles their faith was based. How soon the words of the Apostles got into writing we do not know. Our readers will find the various theories discussed with great lucidity and with ample knowledge in Dr Marcus Dods' "Introduction to the New Testament." Our purpose here is not to enter on that large and interesting field, but to draw attention to some striking and important facts.

At the outset we remark that Jesus Christ wrote nothing. In one place, it is said, He stooped down and wrote on the ground. It is certain, however, that He left no written instructions to His disciples, gave them no fixed set of written precepts, and no detailed system of truth or doctrine. Conscious, if the Gospel records be true, that He came to the world with a greater message than ever had been committed to man, conscious also that His mission was of unspeakable importance to the whole human family, He yet took no step during His earthly ministry to make a permanent record of His mission

and His work,—all His words were spoken words. Other masters, for the most part, have left a written record of their thoughts and reflections. Jesus did not leave any. He spake His words to His disciples, to His followers, to the common people, and even to His enemies. He lived His earnest, simple, sinless life among men, and did His works of wonder, and left the record of them to be recorded by the memories of His disciples. There is here a sublime trust, a divine assurance that His works will not die, and that His words will not pass away. Christ Jesus lived His life, spake His words, endured the sufferings and the agony recorded of Him, and, as the Gospels say, burst the bonds of death, rose from the dead, and ascended up on high.

He trusted to the impression which His life had made on His disciples, and He knew that some worthy record of Him and His work would take its place in the literature of the world. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away," thus He spake, and thus it has come to pass. We call attention to the strangeness of the procedure, and ask our readers to reflect on it. His way was as unique as His life. The sublime confidence that His word and His life would endure, even while He took no steps to make a record of them, the belief that He had come for the manifestation of God and for the redemption of the world, and yet leaving all the future of His work and of His mission to the impression made on His disciples,—surely this is both strange and sublime.

There is something more to be learned from this strange procedure, something too of lasting value.

We have said that He trusted to the impression He had made on His disciples, and this is so far true. But there is one strain in His teaching to which attention must be called if we are to have an adequate conception of His meaning. He could trust to the impression made, because He knew that He had established a permanent relation between Himself and them. His was not to be an historical influence limited in space and time, He was to be permanently present with His people—"Lo I am with you alway, even to the end of the world," "Abide in Me," "Follow Me,"—other words of His are to the same effect. Here again we have a decided contrast with the action of other masters. The truth they taught could be separated from themselves. They gave us what they had and they passed away. The truth they taught was not theirs, was not bound up with them, was not personal to them. With Jesus Christ it is otherwise. "He is the way, the truth, and the life." Apart from His living personality and His abiding influence, His teaching, considered merely as such, could not have had the power which He has exerted over the minds and lives of men. The greater part of His power springs from what He is, and not merely from what He said. The very essence of His power lies in the fact, attested by the witness of many men, that He is a Living person, able to save and help and bless people to-day.

His action in leaving no written record of Himself and His work has therefore to be looked at in connection with His promise to be with His disciples alway, even to the end of the world. He



believed that He would have this power—that after His departure He could still be able to help His people. Does not history testify that He was not mistaken in His belief? Yea, verily; if the testimony of Christians be true, Christ's power to help men is a veritable scientific fact of human experience.

Though He left no written record of His teaching or of His life, have we a true and veritable record of what He said and did? We have the Gospels in our hands. Apart from all historical evidence as to the times and places of their production, or as to the writers of them, we may at present simply look at them and read them. We ought first to look at the problem they have in hand. Taking the story of the Gospels as it stands, what do they aim at? There has been no such theme attempted since literature began to be. Many writers in other literatures, in prose and in poetry, have attempted to delineate the stories of Divine beings, and to tell of their life and work. But the story is no sooner read, whatever be the artistic form or literary quality of it, than we feel at once that it is an unworthy presentation of the Divine. We cannot now think of the Divine Being as acting in such ways, or regard the works recorded of Him in the mythologies of the past as worthy of the Maker of heaven and Earth and of the Upholder of the moral order of the world. The mythologies of the past, taken at their best and highest and purest, are not worthy of their great theme.

There have also been in other religions some attempt to set forth the idea of the incarnation of the Divine. Indian thought is familiar with this conception. But the Pantheism which lies at the



basis of every Indian thought has prevented the idea of incarnation from attaining to any real or ethical value. As Hegel says, "In this universal deification of all finite existence, and consequent degradation of the Divine, the idea of Theanthropy, the incarnation of God, is not a particularly important conception. The parrot, the cow, the ape, &c., are likewise incarnations of God, yet are not therefore elevated above their nature" ("Philosophy of History," Bohn's translation, p. 148). An incarnation which shall remain free from all taint of moral impurity, which shall have no stain of sin, which shall attain to all moral and spiritual perfection, and shall at the same time set forth a true and adequate conception of the Divine, was altogether foreign to Indian thought.

We see, then, the problem which the Gospels undertook to solve. It is to set forth how an eternal being acted within the bounds of space and time : to tell us of the Word Who became flesh and dwelt among men ; of the way He lived and acted, and spoke, and finished the work given Him to do. Such a task was never set to literature, and was never even conceived of among the sons of men. How stupendous a task it was ! and how bold the underlying thought. To tell in plain and simple words, which any one could understand, the story of a Divine life lived under human conditions among men on the earth, were utterly beyond the power of man. How successfully, however, the Gospels have told the story. With the unconscious boldness of reality they tell of the earthly birth and becoming of the Son of God. They place Him boldly under

human conditions, speak of His mother and of the place of His birth, show Him as a child in all the reality of a child life, reveal Him as subject to all the laws of human growth, growing, as other boys grow, in wisdom and in stature ; as a man, they tell us of His work as a carpenter, earning daily bread as other men earn theirs, and show Him to us engaged in the daily toil which marks the ordinary life of man. They enable us to follow Him in His public work, as the teacher, guide, and friend of man. We are in His presence, and are allowed to see Him at His work. He appears to be like other men. He wakes and sleeps, toils and grows wearied, can feel fatigue and know the need of rest. Then we can witness His varying attitudes and expressions. He feels grief and sorrow, knows disappointment and pain, can rejoice with the joys of other people, and is filled with unutterable compassion for the sins, woes, and miseries of men. The Gospels show us also His sympathetic joy over the beauty of the flowers, and the life of bird and beast. He has a kindly glance at the children playing in the market-place, and for all forms of life Jesus has a kindly sympathy, and a keen insight into their ways and manners.

Then we are permitted to be present with Him under the strain of His public work. We see Him in the company of the lost and the outcast, and under His healing gracious influence the ice of evil custom melts, the depths are broken up, and the Magdalen and the possessed become gracious, good, and pure. We see Him in contact with the leper, the paralytic, the halt, and the blind ; and He

restores to health, but in such a way that the sick and sinful hearts are cleansed and healed as well. We hear words from Him such as never man spake, and yet they are spoken so that the common people heard Him gladly. In all his words there is intense simplicity and ineffable wisdom, and He never allows us to think of these words as His merely, they are the Father's words. His works too are the Father's works.

Again, the Gospels make us feel the greatness of His solitude. He is unutterably lonely. For He is a sinless One in a sinful world. He is misunderstood, misrepresented, persecuted. The Gospels set forth His attitude and bearing under the greatest of all inflictions which can befall a man. They show us how misunderstandings deepened and misrepresentations increased, until hatred grew to a climax. People, priests, and rulers conspired against Him; and of His disciples one betrayed Him, one denied Him, and they all forsook Him and fled. At this stage the narrative is lengthened out, detail is added to detail, and the events of that memorable time between His betrayal and death are described with a pathos and a power unequalled in the literature of the world. From the agony of Gethsamene to the agony of the Cross we are led, and no one can with unmoved feelings read the wondrous story. As we witness His bearing under all the accumulated load of His unimaginable sorrow, we say with the Centurion, Truly this is the Son of God.

In all the words attributed to Him there is not one word unworthy of the Person Whom the Gospels

declare Him to be. In all His deeds there is not one unbecoming of Him Who is the Son of God. This, then, is the sober claim we make for the Gospels. They have done something unattempted elsewhere in the literature of the world. They have shown us how God dwelt with man on the earth, and given to man a fit and worthy conception of the Divine. It may be indeed said that we are not fit judges of so great a problem as this, and can pronounce no adequate opinion on the solution of it. We may with humility admit that it is so. It is more becoming to sit and learn and try to imitate than to pronounce judgment. At the same time, we are fit to say what is not worthy of the Divine. We can at least say that any taint of impurity, any tinge of sin, any moral imperfection is unworthy of God; and such would prevent us from accepting a presentation defaced with such elements as a fit and adequate presentation of the Divine. Negatively, at least, the Gospels tell us of a Person Who is without sin. Never man spake like this Man, or lived such a life as Jesus did.

The wonder of the work accomplished by the Gospels grows on us the more we think of it. The story is told in the most simple, artless way: in a form which at first sight seems the most unlikely possible for a book to take which was to be productive of a holy life, and to be the rule of holy living for all succeeding generations of men. That four different accounts of the life of Jesus Christ, each with its peculiarities and differences, should combine to produce a consistent portrait of Him is sufficiently remarkable. The likenesses and the



differences are both striking, but the combined effect is to set forth Jesus Christ in His unique purity, tenderness, and love. But even more striking is the fact set forth in the book already referred to. "The very idea of thus devising a series of incidents (whether these are real or merely fictitious is for the present immaterial) which should thus develop, as involved in them, a body of truth bearing on the deepest and grandest of unseen realities, is something new and hitherto unthought of." For the Gospels proceed in the most simple way. The teaching of Christ is, as it were, incidental. It arises out of the circumstances in which He is placed; springs from the occasions set to Him by the needs of the people who are in His presence; is called forth by some question of His disciples, or from some contradiction of those who did not believe in Him. Occasional, unsystematic, arising out of incidents, are the words He uttered; but be the occasion what it may, the words of Jesus have a penetrating power which is unique. They show us how deep is His insight into the heart of man, how wide is His outlook over the moral universe, and how calm and profound is the wisdom characteristic of Him. How bold, too, and courageous; so bold that men are afraid to launch themselves on the broad and rapid stream of His thought, and are too timid to realise the heroic breadth of moral freedom which is in them. So true is this, that we have not yet learnt to take His deepest teaching with sufficient seriousness. Nor can we yet say that His words are sufficiently understood.

Nor can we separate His words from Himself.



It is Christ as living, working, speaking, dying and rising again, that makes the life and power of the Gospel story. Here we have truth not taught in systematic, dogmatic fashion, but truth manifested in life and action. It is out of the manifested life that truth springs. We read and we reflect, and out of it come true and adequate thoughts about God and the world and man, about the life that now is and the life to come. We cannot here set forth these truths, nor dwell on them. But we may say that we are everywhere in the presence of the Father. We are never outside of His care, never absent from His thought. He has meant us to be something and do something, and each of us something distinct and peculiar. We learn that this world is God's world, He made it, rules it, and has some purpose for it, and we learn also that we shall live on. There is another life; and Jesus said, "Because I live ye shall live also."

When we in our detailed and somewhat clumsy fashion, in our somewhat abstract way, as we are able, gather together the teaching of our Lord, we find ourselves in possession of a wonderful body of truths regarding the three great objects which have ever been the objects of human thought—God, Man, and the World. But we feel that when we have done our best to set forth Christ and His teaching, there is something that has been beyond us, something that has escaped us. It is higher than we know. What science has been to nature, that our theology has been to the Gospels. Nature in her variety and fulness is ever something beyond the grasp of science. We attenuate her into aspects,

torture her with our experiments, press her into our mathematical formulæ, and so far are able to understand ; but in her beauty, her variety, her concrete truth, she ever passes beyond our grasp. So is it with the Gospels. They are as living and concrete as nature, as wonderful and as beautiful. The teaching of them is the teaching of life. The truth of them is given us, as the truth of nature is given. As nature ever remains the touchstone and the test of science, to which all our theories must ever be brought, so with the story of the life of Christ. In their simple, awful reality the Gospels stand, the record of a life—and they continue to stand in their beauty and their power, the wonder and the despair of men, ever steadfastly refusing to comply with our rules, to submit to our ways of thinking, revealing what is sufficient to guide the life of man, and inspire his thoughts, and beckoning us on with the hope of a fuller understanding, yet always keeping something beyond, some height yet to be scaled, and some reward yet to be won. The character revealed in them, in its simple yet transcendental purity, beauty, and strength, remains an abiding wonder. He is so like men, and yet so different, so near and yet so far. His words, too, are words of a wisdom and love beyond those of man, and keep their appointed service for the undreamt-of needs of future generations. His cosmic position and His relation to other spheres are dimly hinted at, and a promise is made that these relations shall be made known to other ages. Both in what they reveal, and in what they dimly foreshadow, the Gospels are unique.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE ORIGIN OF THE GOSPELS.

Limits of Hebrew Literature—The Gospels written by Jews—Narrowness, conservatism, exclusiveness of the Jews—The Gospels set forth a Universal Religion—In no Literature is there a Person like Jesus Christ—Whence came He?—How did Jews think of Him?—His story real—He is a Real Personality—He is contemporary of all generations—All the deeper needs of Man are met in the Gospels.

THE theme of the last chapter prepares us to look at the question of the origin of the Gospels. We know something of Hebrew literature, and of the kind of conceptions and of literary achievement within the reach of the Jews. Outside of Holy Writ the Jewish contribution to the thought and literature of the world has not been great, at least not up to the time when the New Testament literature came into being. The Talmudical literature is more curious than important, and neither in form nor in substance is Jewish literature of such a quality as to detain us even by way of contrast. Minute discussions of Ritual, sayings of the Fathers, and so on; but the value of them now-a-days is mainly that they may enable us to apprehend more clearly allusions in the New Testament otherwise obscure.

The Gospels, however, arose in Palestine. They were written by Jews, and took the form they now have within the first century of our era. The

reputed authors of them are all Jews. Matthew and John are Galileans, while Mark was seemingly of Jerusalem, and Luke, a man of wider culture than any of the others, was a Hellenistic Jew. Something is known of the mental grasp, the habits of thought, and the culture of the Jews of the time of our Lord. We know something of the intense conservatism of the Jews, of their narrowness, their exclusiveness, their contempt of and their hatred of the Gentiles. We know also how difficult it was even for the Apostles trained by Jesus Christ to accept the truth that the mission of the Gospel was world wide, and to agree that a Gentile might become a Christian without becoming a Jew. How then could they have come to the thought of the universality of the Gospel, implied in the Gospels from the outset? The thought was too great for them; they could not have attained to it. And this of itself is a proof that the Gospel was given to them, not invented by them.

But we may take a bolder issue. We may make the comparison not merely with the literature of the Jews, but with the literature of the world and ask it to produce anything like the Gospels. In what literature is there a figure like Jesus Christ? Within the wide range of recorded history, in the vast fields of poetic imagination, is there any one like Him? Is there any one who, like Him, can make the lives of men to be part of his own life? Has there ever been another who could reach across the ages and at this present hour impress us with his personal power, draw us, constrain us, make us feel our unworthiness, cast us down into unutterable humilia-



tion, and arouse in us a devoted loyalty, and an enthusiastic love? Out of the Gospels this calm, gracious, sorrowful figure gleams upon us, grows on us, until almost ere we are aware, we cast ourselves at His feet, His now and evermore ; His in reason, imagination, thought, in feeling and desire. Some measure of loyalty and devotion has been aroused in men by great and impressive personalities. There are recorded instances of such devotion. But then the personal presence of such men was needed to excite such devotion. But the Christ whose form and power grasp us out of the Gospels, lays hold of us at the present hour ; makes us willing not only to die for Him, but to live for Him. Yes ; and He does something greater far, — makes people not only live for Him, but live precisely that kind of life which He wishes them to live.

Now we put the question broadly. Whence came the literature which enshrines the presence of Him Who in Himself is so calm, pure, and gracious, and who can exert so stupendous an influence? We may ask a number of subsidiary questions, and seek by all the methods of historical science to obtain an answer to them. We may seek to ascertain the various steps of the process by which the Gospels came into their present form, and seek to determine the relations, if any, of the Gospels to one another, and to the Apostolic teaching. We may inquire into the cause of the similarities of the first three Gospels to one another, and also seek to find out a probable cause of their individual peculiarities. We may ask whether there was once a separate book consisting mainly or wholly of the



sayings of our Lord, and whether there was another of His doings. These are interesting and important subjects of investigation, and may fitly engage the attention of our most learned and ingenious men, as in fact they do. We may in course of time be able to answer all these questions and solve these problems.

When, however, we have answered all the questions we have referred to, and others of a similar kind, shall we be in a better position with regard to the larger questions we have asked above? How did men come to busy themselves with the story of the life and teaching of Jesus? How did they come to the knowledge of such a person as is set forth in the Gospels? The disciples could not have imagined such a person, nor could succeeding generations of disciples by slow increments, under the influence of a plastic imagination, have formed such a conception. It lies beyond the imagination either of Jew or Gentile ever to have formed such a picture of life and teaching as that of the Lord Jesus Christ. At all events, such another figure does not appear in the literature of the world. We therefore say that Jesus Christ is real, and the Gospels contain a history of a real Person, who actually lived among men, and spake such words and did such deeds as are recorded of Him in the Gospels. Whatever we make of the steps and processes through which the material of the Gospels passed, on their way to their present form, still the source of the Gospel is from Jesus Christ, and the outcome of all the processes is to give us a living account of Him, in His life, work, death, and resurrection. A rational account of the

Gospels can only be given when we assume that they set forth a real Person.

How well too they bear all the tests of reality. How simply and beautifully they solve the problem of religion, and give us a creed, a discipline, and an object of worship. Something to believe, something to guide, some One to adore, worthy to mould the faith, to guide the conduct, and to quicken the adoration of men. "We require a religious solution: a solution which shall deal with the great questions of our being and our destiny in relation to thought and action and feeling. The Truth at which we aim must take account of the conditions of existence and define the way of conduct. It is not for speculation only: so far Truth is the subject of philosophy. It is not for discipline only: so far it is the subject of ethics. It is not for embodiment only: so far it is the subject of art. Religion in its completeness is the harmony of the three—philosophy, ethics, art,—blended into one by a spiritual power, by a consecration at once personal and absolute. The direction of Philosophy, to express the thought somewhat differently, is theoretic, and its aim is the True, as the word is applied to knowledge; the direction of Ethics is practical, and its end is the Good; the direction of Art is representative, and its end is the Beautiful. Religion includes these three ends, but adds to them that in which they find their consecration—the Holy. The Holy brings an infinite sanction and meaning to that which is otherwise finite and relative. It expresses not only a complete inward peace, but also an essential fellowship with God" ("The Gospel of Life," by

Bishop Westcott, pp. 94-5). Bishop Westcott has here but expressed in more detailed and abstract form the thought of Jesus—"I am the way, the truth and the life." In other words, the personality of Jesus Christ is the centre and the sum of the Gospel History.

It was by His personality, by what He manifested Himself to be, that He impressed His disciples so profoundly. The Gospels preserve for us the grand impression made by Him. The form which is most fitted to convey the impression of a great personality is precisely the form which the Gospels have taken. Memoirs by contemporaries, or by those who were familiar with contemporaries, have ever been the way by which the records of the great personalities of the world's history have been preserved for the perusal of future generations. It is not necessary that the writers of the memoirs should have completely understood the person of whom they write. It is enough that they faithfully record his actions and his words; tell us how he acted, spoke, and lived, and have set forth with some measure of fidelity the scenes and circumstances of his life. There are some biographies of this kind, which tell us of a man who simply lived and talked and walked with other men, and did no great or lasting work; but by the record of what he was, and how he lived, a great impression has been made on the mind. A great biography of this kind makes us in a measure the contemporary of the man of whom we read. Many allusions may be somewhat obscure, and some things we may only dimly see, but in essentials we see the man in his habit as he lived.

The Gospels form a biography of this kind. The disciples followed Him because they must. He impressed them, and called them, and they could do no otherwise than follow Him. The writers of the Gospels record the impression He made on them or on those who companied with Him. They are written in such a way as to make all men in a sense the contemporaries of Jesus Christ, and all generations have, to speak of nothing higher at present than the mere literary record, in a measure those advantages which the first disciples had. We see Christ Jesus as He lived among men, in the solitude of the mountain top, among the throngs of men, sharing their feasts, helping them in their sorrows, journeying with them, and wherever He is, and whatsoever company He is in, always a friend, and always in the most simple way leading their thoughts upward to the Father. Those who were with Him and were responsive were lifted upwards towards God, and the responsive readers of the Gospels are in exactly the same position.

He is no mere teacher, lawgiver, thinker. He does not tell men merely what they are to think, what they are to believe, or what they are to do. He is a Friend who has blended His life with theirs in such a way as to bring out the best, purest, highest that is in them, or that they can become. Other massive personalities may simply overmaster men, and make them mere imitators, until they can do nothing but repeat their phrases, mannerisms, attitudes, or ways of thinking. But when we look at the influence of Christ on the men who were with Him, we find that each of them became more his



true self. Contact with Him seemed to enable them to realise themselves, and to attain to that ideal perfection meant for them. The disciples of Christ never lose their particular personality ; they never form a school, or repeat set phrases as if they were a shibboleth. They are lifted up out of the common life of the merely selfish, and in Christ each finds his own true and highest self, for union with Christ brings out the true ideal self, which each man is bound to be ; for each man is separate, and has his own lot, calling, and responsibility. He has his own work to do, and his own place to fill. Jesus Christ, as we see Him in the Gospels, is always careful to make each man feel that he is a living person, responsible for himself and his conduct, and possessed of the worth and dignity of a man who is responsible. The Gospels have the same influence still on all who read them. Readers are brought into the presence of Jesus Christ, and in Him they are made alive. They rise to a sense of their worth and dignity as human beings, and they feel the sense of responsibility when, by contact with Him, they understand that they are beings who may be educated into fitness for eternal life.

Let us look for a little while at the way in which all the views of the higher life of man are met in these memoirs of our Lord. It has ever been a question with earnest men, ever since man began to think, How are we to regard the unseen power on which we know we depend ? We know something of the answers which have been given to this question. All visible, all tangible forms have been used to give form and shape to the Unseen Maker of the

Universe, and to-day we are tempted to take refuge in silence, or are invited to speak of "the Unknowable power." We put ourselves under the guidance of the Gospels, and we ask, How are we to think of God? Our scientific masters give us but little guidance here. They tell us that all things are ruled by fixed inexorable laws, and the Unseen power seems to remain in the background; and there seems in the teaching of science to be "no hope of answer or redress" from beyond the veil. True, it is the business of science to point out the properties of things and the general laws of their manifestation, and science does little else.

In the Gospels, however, we are in a different atmosphere. We have still laws, constitutions, properties of things, and also fixedness and order. But in the order and beyond it there is something else, or rather there is the presence of some one. The Unseen Ruler of the Universe is not distant, nor absent, nor indifferent. He is never far from any one of His creatures. He cares for the grass on the mountains, cares also for the sparrows, and cares for men. We listen while Christ tells us of the Father, and lo! the whole earth becomes luminous with the presence of God. We learn also of His love, His watchful care, and His deep interest in every man.

A fresh light is cast on the character of the Father as we watch the character of the Son. The helpfulness of Christ is a revelation of the Father. What Christ is that God is; and Christ never refused help to the call of need. And the help given was always of the kind which was required, effective,

loving, discriminative. Thus the revelation which Christ gave us of the Father has added to the thought of the Might, Majesty, and Magnificence of God which we learn from the works of creation, the thought that He is a loving God, rich in mercy, who knoweth what things we need even before we ask Him.

Again, notice the teaching of the Gospels with regard to sin. The consciousness of sin has been universal, and the feeling of estrangement from God has obtained manifold expression in the literature of the world. It has filled the nations, too, with slavish fear of God. The Gospels, simple from one point of view, tend to deepen our sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and to impress us with a sense of the horror with which God regards sin. Nowhere in Holy Writ is the awfulness of sin so impressively set forth as in the Gospels. But in the Gospels we are taught that sin may be forgiven, and the way of forgiveness is made clear. How can man be reconciled to God? The revelation of the character of God made in the Gospels at first seems to make it harder to answer the question. For the revelation made by Jesus Christ transcends every other so greatly, that we grow afraid, we can never be reconciled to such a pure, holy, loving God. But with the revelation of the purity of God, came the revelation of the forgiveness of sins. And this great need of man is met.

Then, too, the awful questions about the future life, the life beyond death, which have weighed on

man so heavily from the beginning. Are they answered here? All the generations have died, and all of them had some thought of the other world. But no traveller has returned to tell us whether there is such a life, or of what kind it is. We need not expatiate on the pathos or the sadness caused by the doubt, the uncertainty about the future life. It is so easy to be pathetic here. But the doubt and the uncertainty are ended if the Gospel story is true. "Because I live ye shall live also." Christ has returned, and Christ has said, Fear not, I am the First and the Last and the Living One, and I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore. Fear not to live, thus we hear Him say, for I am the living one. Fear not to die, for I was dead. Fear not what comes after death, for I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of the Unseen World and of death.

The Gospels stand well all the tests of Reality. The life recorded here must be real, for no one could have invented it. The Personality also is real, for He is so unique as to pass beyond the bounds of human imagination. The help He gave to men, and gives to them, is real, and the truth He taught has been verified a thousand times over in the heart and conscience of men, and in their life and conduct.



## CHAPTER VI.

## THE SUPERNATURAL.

The Demand of Strauss — His Procedure — Result of it is to give us an Impersonal Christ—Attempts to reduce Christ to the level of Ordinary Humanity—"Translation"—Can we "translate" the Christian Movement, or the Christian Documents, or Christ Himself to the level of Common History?—Christ's Miraculous Works natural to Him—Character of the Gospel Miracles.

STRAUSS has clearly and fully set forth the aim and purpose of much recent literature on the question of the truth of Christianity. "In the person and acts of Jesus no supernaturalism shall be suffered to remain." Not many writers have set forth their aim as clearly as Strauss has done. But in the various attempts which have been made to account for Christianity without a supernatural Christ, this has ever been either the postulate they start with, or the result to which they come. We may have an attempt made to account for Christ and Christianity on philosophical principles, and then we may have the conclusion that the valuable and the true thing in Christianity is the principle of self-sacrifice, and the service of Christ to Humanity was simply that He presented this principle in a form so concrete and impressive as to stamp it for ever on the imagination and heart of the race, and made it a principle which could practically influence conduct. Having got the idea, the scaffolding may be re-

moved, and the Christ is no more needed, save to illustrate and set forth again this great idea.

We may have an attempt to get rid of the personal supernatural Christ, which says, with Strauss, "This is not the mode in which the Idea realises itself: it is not wont to lavish all its fulness on one exemplar and be niggardly to all others, to express itself perfectly in that one individual and imperfectly in all the rest. It rather lives to distribute its riches among a multiplicity of exemplars which reciprocally complete each other; in the alternate appearance and suppression of a series of individuals. Is this no true realisation of the idea? Is not the union of the Divine and human natures a real one in a far higher sense, when I regard the whole race of man as its realisation, than when I single out a single man as its realisation?" Thus we find that Strauss, in his "Life of Jesus" and in his "Dogmatik," seeks to elevate humanity as a whole to the place from which the Personal Christ is dethroned. It is Humanity that is the Incarnation of the Divine, that works miracles, that dies and rises again, and ascends to heaven. It is Humanity that makes atonement, "for pollution cleaves to the individual only, and does not touch the race or its history." This, however, was too artificial a solution to satisfy even Strauss for any length of time, and we find that in his latest book he simply yields himself to a blind adoration of the "Universe."

As, however, the objection of Strauss about the Idea and the individual has persisted in many forms, and appears very frequently in current literature, we may look at it. It is a gross and quanti-

tative way of looking at the question. Strauss thinks of Personality and its qualities as if it was a mere material thing. He apparently thinks of intellectual, moral, and spiritual attributes as if they were so many tons of coal. Of material wealth it may be truly said that all I can obtain for myself is so much taken from other people; but of intellectual, moral, and spiritual wealth, it may be truly said that it is kept by giving it away. If an individual were possessed of all knowledge, all purity, all goodness, the effect would be simply to increase the mental, moral, and spiritual wealth of other people. The great thinkers of the past have increased our power of thinking—their science, philosophy, art, religion, have become part of the inheritance of the race.

Let Christ be acknowledged to be all that the New Testament says He is, and the result would be, not that He has impoverished all others, by His perfect realisation of the idea, but that He has enriched the whole human race, and every member of it, by the whole wealth of His mental, moral, and spiritual achievement. We may learn to think with all the breadth of the thought of Christ, feel in some measure as He felt, and be filled with the impassioned goodness embodied in Him. To have that pure, great, unselfish life always before us, to speak and think His thoughts, to work ourselves by impassioned meditation and constant imitation of Him into His way of looking at God and man and the world, would surely be something worth striving for. How could He be to us the example, the stimulus He is, if all perfections had not been sphered in Him? The more perfect, the greater,

the higher He is, the richer are we ; and the best and swiftest way of enriching the race—to use the language of Strauss for a moment—would be to enrich an individual with all moral and spiritual wealth, and from Him to let it flow out to every individual of the race.

There are other ways by which men seek to bring Christ down to the stature of an ordinary man. There are endless criticisms of the Gospel documents, and attempts to account for Christianity by a process which began after Christ. The critical controversy has been keen, and fierce, and protracted. But it is now within sight of the end. The main documents of the New Testament are documents of the first century. We do not mean to dwell on this phase of the question. For the difficulty about accepting the supernatural character and mission of Jesus Christ is not one based on history, and has not been enhanced by the results of scientific historical inquiry. It is from what men bring to the study of history, not from what they find in it, that their difficulties arise. The phrase which is used most frequently nowadays is that we must “translate” the events of the New Testament into events which can be paralleled in the ordinary experience of man. The phrase is milder than that of Strauss, but it means the same thing. It is said that one who sought to found a religion complained to Talleyrand that no one regarded him, and no one accepted his religion, and he asked Talleyrand what he ought to do. Talleyrand is said to have answered, “You might be crucified and die, and rise again the third day !”



Let us consider the demand made on us, when we are asked to reduce the epoch in which Christianity appeared to the level of ordinary experience. Let us understand what is meant by “translation.” It simply means that we are to misread history ; that we are to strip the first century of our era of that which forms its unique and distinctive mark among the centuries of the history of the world. We should not hesitate to “translate” it if we only could. If we could only find a period like it, or a movement in any of the centuries worthy of comparison with that great movement which cast into the life of humanity the vast power of Christianity, we should rejoice in the fact. We are not able to find a period fit to be compared with it, and we are thus, in deference to the historic spirit, compelled to regard it as unique. All the great movements of the human spirit, during the Christian centuries and in Christian lands,—movements which have ushered in a reformation of manners, and a revival of religious faith, owe their strength and success to the New Testament, and have been fruitful just in proportion to the thoroughness with which they have embodied the spirit of the New Testament. For in these Christian documents there is a power of perennial life, and a constant source of revival and reform.

What Christianity accomplished in the first century we have not space to describe. A movement began in Palestine, and after the Founder of it was no longer present with His followers, they were few in numbers. They were also without learning, without power, or influence. They had no wealth,

nor social position, nor any of those outward advantages which impress the minds of men. These few people were bold enough to attempt a mission which was to change the future of the world, to reverse the usual standards by which men were wont to measure human worth, to make men love what once they hated, and hate what once they loved. They went forth to reorganise society from the foundations upwards ; to replace pagan standards of conduct by Christian standards ; to substitute the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount for the ethics of Aristotle ; to make love the basis of action, and self-sacrifice its rule ; and to make the service of man blend with the service of God in the new life of the Kingdom of God ; this was the greatest, the most transcendent task ever committed to or attempted by human hands. They ever began with the individual, and demanded from him such a change of life, character, and aim, that it could only be described as a New Creation. These people thus made new creatures, the apostles of Jesus Christ organised into a new community, whose law of life was to be Love to the Master and love to one another.

The apostles of Jesus Christ undertook the work, and they succeeded. Into the history of the growth of this great movement we shall not enter here. Whether we consider the greatness of the change, or the means by which it was effected, the wonder of it is equally great. None were made Christians by compulsion. They were persuaded to believe in Christ and to obey Him. In some measure, too, these early Christians were able to realise the

Christian life. They laid aside the ideals and the practices of pagan life, and they strove to live after the pattern of Him who left us an ensample that we should follow in His steps. We say, then, that a movement like this cannot, without a sacrifice of truth and science, be translated into the ordinary experience of humanity.

Now, can the New Testament be paralleled in the literature of the world? Take it as it has approved itself in the history of Christendom, as it is operative in the life of humanity, and say is there any literature like it. It is productive of a certain kind of life,—the best kind that the world has ever seen. The life realised in it, commanded by it, enforced by its precepts and examples, stands forth as worthy of admiration and imitation, and yet, though eighteen centuries have elapsed since the book appeared, this life stands forth as one not yet attained to or realised in practice by the best, purest, and holiest of men. The best and highest life of Christianity comes short in a measureless degree of the life set forth in the New Testament. For the main charge against Christianity has ever been that it has not realised its ideal. To-day, with all our learning, science, appliances, we cannot rise to the height of the New Testament life. It confronts us in its calm serene majesty, and we feel ashamed of ourselves in its presence. How is this? Can we “translate” a book, a literature of this commanding quality, into the ordinary literature of humanity? We trow not.

The greatest obstacle to “translation” remains to be stated. We cannot “translate” Jesus Christ.

He is unique. The only way to show that He is a mere man, would be to produce men like Him. It is not pretended by any that there have been many men like Him ; and few are so bold as to say there are any like Him. Even those who think of Him as merely human, freely admit that He is the only one of His kind, the purest, best, truest human life ever lived, and the greatest revealer of God ever present among men. But mere humanity, however endowed or enriched by special favour from God, is quite inadequate to explain the great creative personality of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But it is said that miraculous works are attributed to Him, and the miraculous is impossible. Well, if we were to cast overboard the miraculous element, much would remain that could not be translated with ordinary experience. The great Christian movement, the literature of the New Testament, and the superhuman character of Jesus Christ, would remain. But we are by no means disposed to throw the wonderful works of Jesus Christ overboard. The wonderful works of Christ are so interwoven with His words and His life, that we cannot tear them asunder without the destruction of the whole fabric. They serve to reveal and manifest His character. Their nature and the manner of their working are revelations of Jesus and of God. We cannot afford to dispense with them, and if they conflict with any theory of the Universe, it is time that that theory should be revised and corrected.

What kind of supernatural working is it which we see manifested in the Gospel history? When

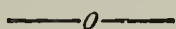


we look at it, apart from the general question of the supernatural, and consider it in itself, and then in comparison with other accounts of so-called miracles, we are struck with many things. Elsewhere the record of the miraculous is manifestly given for the sake of display, and incongruous, useless, non-moral prodigies abound. In the Gospel, when wonderful works are done, they are done for good and gracious ends. Jesus does not use the power He has for Himself. He does not use His power to provide bread for Himself, when He is weak and worn by prolonged trial and abstinence from food. He does not use His power to free Himself from the hands of cruel and malicious men, when he is betrayed into their hands and is led away to death. He does not use His power to provide for His own personal wants or the wants of His disciples. He does not work a miracle to provide what could be procured by the exercise of ordinary prudence and insight. Even when He has suddenly to provide for the five thousand suddenly thrust on His care, there had been sufficient food provided for the wants of Himself and His disciples. He does no wonderful work for the sake of doing it. Every one is a means to something beyond itself. They are done for great spiritual ends. His works are always instructive, for they reveal Himself as well as manifest the great sources of love, compassion, and help stored up in Him. His reserve in the use of them also serves to make Him an example to those who have no such resources on which to draw. He taught men to submit with patience to the ordinary lot of man,

to depend on the providence of God. And He submitted Himself to these conditions. He worked for daily bread, that others also might submit to work. He endured suffering, lived as other men lived, and was slain as other men are slain. If He had acted otherwise, if He had made stones to be bread, how could He have called on other men to labour for their daily bread? If He had used His Divine power to provide for Himself, how could He have called on man not to think too much of the bread that perisheth? So He submitted Himself to human conditions, and lived His life as if He had no unusual sources at His command, and left us an example that we should follow in His steps. He shared the ordinary life of man, and was afflicted in all their afflictions.

The wonderful works of Jesus Christ form a necessary part of the revelation of His character. Unlimited power at His command, and never used for the mere pleasure of exercising it, never for any purpose which could be accomplished by ordinary means, never for Himself, but always for others, and for helpful and gracious ends. This is what is forced on our attention by a study of the Gospels. Granted that a person like Jesus Christ is possible, then for Him the works are natural and rational. They can be understood. They are not rash and sudden inroads on the orderly course of nature, nor violent reversals of the laws and constitutions of things; rather are they the removal of hindrances and of obstacles to the realisation of those higher ends which nature was intended to subserve. Thus the teaching and

the wonderful works of Christ have their proper place in the orderly evolution of the Kingdom of God, the final end of all creation. Though in one aspect of them these wonderful works have passed away, and are no more, yet in another aspect they abide. They abide as a revelation of Divine method, and as a manifestation of Divine character. They show us that God works, and how God works, for the redemption of man, for the restoration of moral and spiritual order, and for the realisation of the Kingdom of Heaven.



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE TESTIMONY OF PAUL.

The Influence of Jesus Christ over the Original Apostles—Could Christ influence Men who did not know Him during His Earthly Ministry?—Paul's Answer—Paul's Experience—His Conversion—Made Captive by Christ—His Surrender to Christ—The Risen Christ can take possession of Men's Lives—Paul's Epistles—The Conception of Christ contained in them, also of His Life, Mission, Work—The Christian Life a Real Life, accounted for only if Christ be Real.

HAVE we any evidence that Jesus Christ exerted power over the minds of men, and exercised dominion over their life and conduct after He was no longer present with them? We have, of course, evidence that those who had companied

with Him during the years of His earthly ministry continued to believe in Him ; to preach the Gospel He had taught them, and to exercise the ministry of reconciliation He had entrusted to them. We know that the original Apostles, who had been cast down, perplexed, doubtful, regained hope, confidence, and courage, and went on doing their work, notwithstanding the risks and dangers to which they were exposed. They cheerfully went to prison and to death for His name's sake. But on their testimony we do not mean to dwell.

Another, and perhaps a more forcible testimony, lies near our hand. He was able to keep the faith and trust of those who had been His companions. Could He also overcome His enemies, subdue His foes, take captive those who feared and disliked him, subject them to His influence, make them live the kind of life He insisted on in His followers, and send them forth to preach what they had sought to destroy, and to build up what they had sought to pull down? We have an undoubted instance, which meets all these conditions, and serves as a triumphant illustration of the power of the Risen Christ. There is a man whose life we know from his own writings ; writings of his which everyone acknowledges to be his ; and these writings tell us what kind of man the Apostle Paul was. We have at least four Epistles from his pen, and of these Baur says—"There has never been the slightest suspicion of unauthenticity cast upon these four Epistles, and they bear so incontestably the character of Pauline originality, that there is no conceivable ground for the assertion of critical



doubts in their case" (*Paul*, English translation, Vol. II., p. 110). We might go further and add to this list those other Epistles of Paul which are now acknowledged by almost every one who has a right to speak on the subject. We limit ourselves to the four Epistles—namely, the Epistle to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, and the Epistle to the Galatians.

From these Epistles we learn that Paul was a Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin, proud of his race, and intensely attached to the customs, observances, and religion of his people. "For ye have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jew's religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and made havoc of it : and I advanced in the Jew's religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. i. 13, 14). Here, then, is the case before us. An educated Jew ; not ignorant either of other modes of life than the Jewish, for he was of Tarsus, and thus for a time under the influence of Greek culture ; trained in Jerusalem under the wisest and most trusted teachers ; learned in the lore of the Rabbis, and fit himself to be a Rabbi. His intellectual power and grasp are undoubted. He was earnest, diligent, sincere. He is not one who had wasted his intelligence in vain speculations, nor had he spent his strength in self-indulgence. On the contrary, he had given himself to the search after truth, and pressed on in an endless quest after righteousness. He had sought, but he had not found righteousness.

This man, stern, upright, self-controlled as he

was, had in some measure realised his ideal. The righteousness of the Jew seemed to be within his grasp. All that a Jew might hope for might be his. He was approved by his teachers, admired by his equals, trusted by his superiors. Up to a certain time it had never occurred to him that he would lay aside his pride of birth and descent, forget his position and standing as a Jew, gladly surrender all that up to this time had made life desirable, and seek his work and mission in another direction altogether. He came into contact with the followers of Jesus. Among them he found an ideal of life altogether different from that which he cherished. He found a different reading of the Old Testament. Sections on which he had laid the main stress had with them fallen into the background, while those which he had forgotten were by them mainly dwelt on. Many other contrasts were also apparent. But the main thing he found was this, that if the Christians were right, he was utterly and hopelessly wrong. No one can willingly submit to have the basis on which his life is built shattered. Saul was furious, and resolved to do all that in him lay to destroy this party whose views would upset all the convictions of his life. Saul did nothing by halves. "He persecuted the church of God, and made havoc of it." He continued in this course of conduct for a time, and while he was engaged in it he thought he was doing God service. He exhibits all the peculiarities of the persecuting mind, and from his own account of himself, he seems then to have never thought that it was possible that he was mistaken. The persecuting mind never doubts,

never hesitates : it is always thoroughly persuaded, and Saul was a thorough persecutor.

This man was made captive by Jesus Christ. Suddenly he was seized, laid hold of by his Master, and from that day onward he lived for Jesus Christ. The effect is manifest : Saul the persecutor becomes the apostle of Jesus Christ. He was not a man given to change, and yet he changed. There must be a cause adequate to produce this effect. In after years he never hesitates to admit that he had changed, and he says that his conversion was a divine, a supernatural event, wrought in him by Christ Jesus the Crucified and Risen One. That the change was a thorough one is unmistakeable. Paul surrendered much in order to become a Christian, and his attachment to Christianity was tested by his endurance and persecution of all kinds. He had many trials, much suffering, and great tribulations to endure. He bore them gladly for Jesus' sake. "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake" (2 Cor. xii. 10).

Here, then, we see the Crucified One, within a few years of His departure, take possession of the life of a man, filling the heart, imagination, reason of Paul with the image of Himself, subduing the man to Himself in so complete a way that He ruled the thinking, willing, feeling of Paul to such a degree that Paul is constrained to say, "I live : yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." Paul, too, was persuaded that he was in living fellowship with a real Person, Whose Presence was his strength, and

Whose approval was his highest reward. Jesus Christ had made this man's life a part of His own life, and yet in such a way that the personality of Paul, in all its characteristic fulness, had never been properly realised until Jesus Christ had taken possession of him. In the service of Christ Paul had found perfect freedom. The love of Christ constrained him. He felt the expansive and the expulsive power of a new affection, which quickened and purified and expanded his life, until all his capacities and faculties were in a glow of fervent exercise. Thus Paul found a supreme object to arouse his desires, call forth his affections, enlighten his intelligence, fill his imagination, and give scope to his highest reason. Whatever Paul was in all his natural bent and capacity before he met with Christ, that he was afterwards and more.

From this conspicuous example we see that the Crucified One could take possession of a man's life, and mould it to higher issues. From the case of Paul we can infer that Jesus Christ is a living influence over the minds of men. If it were needful we could bring additional evidence to the same effect from all the generations which have come and gone since the time of Paul. The facts of the religious Christian life are as real as the facts with which physical science has to deal, to be treated with the same respect, and to be dealt with as earnestly and sincerely. To insist on this at present would lead us too far afield, and we shall limit ourselves to the life of Paul.

If we read the Epistles of Paul in their chronological order, and endeavour to find from them



what Paul's conception of the Personality of his Master was, we shall not be surprised at the loyalty and devotion he showed. To him Christ was all in all. Every problem which Paul had to solve he brought into direct relation with the person of Christ. If the question related to the universality of the Gospel, and its free offer to every one of the human family, then, for Paul, this question was settled by the universality of Christ. If the question was one of moral purity and church order, it was solved by the same reference. The question of the future life had obtained for Paul a definite answer, because Christ rose from the dead. And so of all other questions, be their nature what they might be, the Apostle of the Gentiles found them answered by a reference to Christ and His salvation. His own relation to his Master was intensely real, and was such as to bear the stress and strain of all the tumult of his varied life, and of his manifold suffering and work.

Had we no other record of Christ and His work than we have in the Epistles of Paul, we should be forced to the conclusion that Jesus Christ was a real person, who lived a unique life, and wielded an influence over men exerted by none before. From the writings of the Apostle we gather that Jesus Christ was a Jew, of the seed of David, according to the flesh. Paul thus writes to the Corinthians : " I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried ; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures : and that he appeared

to Cephas ; then to the twelve : then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once ; of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep : then he appeared to James : then to all the apostles : and last of all, as unto one born out of due time, he appeared to me also" (1 Cor. xv. 3-8). We learn also that Jesus lived a life of poverty, that He had gathered around Him a number of disciples, among whom Paul mentions Peter and John, and James, the Lord's Brother. We have also the account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, and the knowledge that our Lord was betrayed, and betrayed at night. Other facts we might instance also, but these are sufficient to show that Jesus was a real person, who lived at a definite period of this world's history, died a death of supreme suffering on the Cross, was buried, and rose again on the third day.

What kind of life He lived, what kind of mission He accomplished, and what kind of doctrine He taught, we also learn from the writings of Paul. The main theme is redemption. According to Paul, "He Who was rich for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich." "All things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation ; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors, therefore, on behalf of Christ, as though God were intreating by us ; we beseech you on behalf of Christ be ye reconciled to God. Him

who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 18-21). It is not necessary to set forth here all that Paul believed Christ to be. It has been frequently done. Suffice it to say that Paul believed Him to be the eternal Son of God, Who was before He became man, Who came into this world to reveal the Father unto men, and to reconcile man to God, Who lived among men and died for their sins, and rose again for their justification. Paul also believed that He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

It is to be remembered also that these documents were written within a quarter of a century of the crucifixion of our Lord, that the events recorded or referred to in them, were within the knowledge of many then living: that the beliefs and doctrines set forth in them were shared by many thousands of people scattered throughout the Roman Empire from Jerusalem to Antioch, Corinth, and Rome. In Paul's time there were Christians in Palestine, Antioch, Cilicia, Galatia, Corinth, and in Rome. There are references to all these in the Epistles of Paul. Let us observe the bearing of all these facts on the truth of Christianity. Within the space of a few years after the death of our Lord, there are people who believe that He was risen from the dead, that He was their Saviour and their God, Who ever liveth to make intercession for them. So persuaded were they of the truth and reality of their faith in Christ, that they were ready to live according to His will, and to die for His sake. They were glad to suffer shame for His

name. They were ready to give up all that men usually hold dear rather than deny their Lord and Master. There is no doubt, everyone admits, that their faith was real, intense, and practical. Had their faith any basis in reality? It is difficult to account for it, if we deny the facts on which they said it was based. That great historic monument is an historical fact. Of that there is abundant evidence.

It is fully accounted for if the Founder of Christianity was such a Person as is set forth in the Epistles of Paul. If a Divine Person really took human nature on Himself, submitted to the conditions of human life, worked among men and lived a life of sinlessness and beneficence, died for the sins of men, rose again from the dead, and liveth for ever, then we have a sufficient explanation of the reverence, loyalty, and love, with which He was regarded by His followers. For they worshipped Him as Divine, were loyal to Him as their King, loved Him as their Redeemer. Let these facts be denied or ignored, and it is not possible to account for the Christian movement, or the Christian life. For the Christian life was real, and was actually lived by men on the earth. The power of faith in Christ made bad men good, caused the selfish man to become unselfish, made sinners into saints, and wrought universally, on all on whom it came, a moral reformation of the most conspicuous kind. Real changes of this kind are not wrought by anything but real causes. The facts made the faith, and the faith wrought the wondrous change.

Many attempts have been made to show that the



faith made the facts. But we have already shown that it was beyond the power of the human intelligence to imagine a figure like that of Jesus Christ. We are aware that many able, learned, ingenious men have set themselves to show that the faith has made the facts. We are often saved the trouble of a critical examination of these attempts, for it is done to our hands. Strauss made a clean sweep of all the older attempts, and the theories of the older rationalism lie thick in the pages of his book, slain by his hands, and killed by his contemptuous mockery. His own theory of "Myth" did not survive the cruel handling of Baur, and Baur's own explanation has not fared any better. At present the theories of Strauss and Baur have given place to the fancies of Pfleiderer, which are even less impressive than they were.

For the faith in Jesus Christ was a veritable cause which wrought real changes in the heart, life, and conduct of men; what a faith not grounded in reality could never do. The simple explanation is that the Living Christ came into the lives of these people, revealed Himself to them and in them, took possession of their lives, lifted them out of self, and enabled them to walk worthy of their high calling. What He did in the first centuries of the Church He still continues to do; and He is with His disciples alway, even to the end of the world.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## CHRISTIANITY AND THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

The "Epistle to Diognetus"—Christian Character described in it—Conflict with Heathenism—Separateness of Christians—Christian View of Life destroyed the Basis of Roman Society—Christianity at first not distinguished from Judaism—Persecution for the Name in the Second Century; when did this begin?—The Apologists—Lightfoot, Mommsen, Ramsay, Hardy—Pliny—Nero—Recognition by the Empire of the Character of Christianity—Relation of Christianity to the State—Inference.

To gain some fitting conception of the Christian community as it existed in the middle of the second century, we quote from the "Epistle to Diognetus." "For Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind, either in locality, or in speech, or in existence. For they dwell not somewhere in cities of their own, neither do they use some different language, nor practise an extraordinary kind of life. Nor again do they possess any invention discovered by any intelligence or study of ingenious men, nor are they masters of any human dogma as some are. But while they dwell in cities of Greeks and barbarians as the lot of each is cast, and follow the native customs in dress and food and the other arrangements of life, yet the constitution of their own citizenship which they set forth is marvellous, and confessedly contradicts expectation. They dwelt in their own countries, but only as sojourners; they

bear their share in all things as citizens, and they endure all hardships as strangers. Every foreign country is a Fatherland to them, and every Fatherland is foreign. They marry like all other men, and they beget children; but they do not cast away their offspring. They have their meals in common, but not their wives. They find themselves in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. Their existence is on earth but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, and they surpass the laws in their own lives. They love all men and they are persecuted by all. They are ignored, and yet they are condemned. They are put to death, and yet they are endowed with life. They are in beggary, and yet they make many rich. They are in want of all things, and yet they abound in all things. They are dishonoured, and yet they are glorified in their dishonour. They are evil-spoken of, and yet they are vindicated. They are reviled and they bless. They are insulted and they respect. Doing good they are punished as evil-doers; being punished they rejoice, as if they are thereby quickened by life. War is waged against them as aliens by the Jews, and persecution is carried on by the Gentiles; and yet those that hate them cannot tell the reason of their hostility” (Lightfoot’s *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 505-6).

Thus the Christians were a community within a community. They were members of a universal society, scattered throughout the world, personally unknown to each other, yet united by spiritual laws of the closest kind. Augustine calls it “a spiritual republic in the midst of pagan society.” Christianity

did not seek to upset the existing order of society by any violent action. They were loyal citizens, who strove to render to Cæsar the things which belonged to Cæsar. They did not touch civic or political institutions ; but Christianity implanted a spirit within men which was utterly incompatible with the existing order of things. They bore the civil burdens laid on them with a ready mind, cheerfully paid the tribute and the taxes laid lawfully on them. The Magistrate was to them an ordinance of God appointed to maintain order, and they gave to him a loyal obedience. They honoured the Emperor and prayed for him as the head of the State ; nor is there among the many revolts and seditions of the first three centuries the record of even one headed by a Christian. They were treated as outlaws, as public enemies, and they continued to be resigned and submissive ; for they believed they ought to uphold all established order which was not in flagrant contradiction of the laws of God.

At one point, however, obedience to the Magistrate ceased to be a duty binding on a Christian. At the line where obedience to the established order meant disobedience to Christ, the Christians made a stand and would enter into no compromise. Thus they would not consent to give divine honours to the Emperors, nor sacrifice before their statues, nor swear by their genii. They believed that they were bound to obey him because he was appointed to govern in earthly things, but worship was due to God alone. This of itself was sufficient to bring them into conflict with the State. For in these early centuries the Roman State was constituted on that



basis ; and the oath by the genius of the Emperor was the official oath taken by all who held office in the State. Public life also was closely connected with the rites and ceremonies and sacrifices of paganism ; and Christians from the beginning were constrained to refuse to hold office in the State.

It is impossible within our limits to set forth the ways in which Christianity came into conflict with Heathenism. To do so would be to give an adequate account of the pagan ideal of life for the individual, for the family, for the community, and for the State, and to place the Christian ideal alongside of it. For there were here different religions, different ideals of life, and ethics which were mutually subversive. For the Christian religion was a reality, expressed a relation to the Three-one God which was binding on a Christian in all his thoughts, words, and deeds. The religion of the Roman was satisfied if he fulfilled his compact with the god, and performed the rites, offered the sacrifices, and fulfilled what he had vowed. If their views about their relation to the Supreme Being were different, different also were their views about man. To a Christian all men were of one blood, and they were bound to honour all men. The unity in Christ was great enough to abolish all differences of race, blood, colour, social position. Jew and Greek, bond and free, man and woman, met on one common level. They were members of one great brotherhood. If the Christians acted on these principles, if they shaped their lives according to the precepts of the New Testament, the very fact of their doing so was sufficient to overturn ancient

society from the very foundation of it. For the practice of the new religion was quite inconsistent with the continued existence of the pagan view of life.

It was not necessary for a Christian actively to attack the institutions of the Empire. He could not be a Roman official without ceasing to be a Christian, and he quietly withdrew from any claims to office. He could not mingle with the pagan multitude in their games, spectacles, religious observances, and again he withdrew. He could not maintain social intercourse with those who still continued to be pagans, for the daily life of the heathen bore a constant reference to, and a habitual recognition of, the family gods. Thus religiously, ethically, socially, the Christian was constrained to lead a life apart, and Christians were thrown more and more on the society of those who were themselves followers of Christ. The attention of a government so vigilant and watchful as that of Rome must have been drawn to the Christian community at a very early period of its existence. For nearly thirty years it does not appear that any distinction was drawn between Jews and Christians. The Christians were looked on as Jews. And as the Jewish religion was recognised as a tolerated national religion, Christians for a time were also ignored. For the most part the usual attitude taken by a Roman official was that of Gallio, reported in the Acts of the Apostles : " If, indeed, it were a matter of wrong or of wicked villany, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you : but if they are questions about words and

names and your own law, look to it yourselves : I am not minded to be a judge of these matters. And he drave them from the judgment seat" (Acts xviii. 14, 15).

A time came, however, when the distinction between Jew and Christian was recognised by the Roman Government. The Christians were outlawed, proscribed, and persecuted. It was a crime punishable by death for a man to confess that he was a Christian. It is so notorious that Christians were punished for the name that we need not dwell at any length on the fact. At all events, in the second century this was the case. Justin Martyr says, "If any of the accused deny the Name, and say he is not a Christian, you acquit him, as having no evidence against him as an evil-doer ; but if any one acknowledge that he is a Christian, you punish him on account of his acknowledgment. Justice requires that you inquire into the life both of him who confesses and of him who denies, that by his deeds it may be apparent what kind of man each is" (*Apology*, chap. iv., Clark's Translation, p. 9). Athenagoras, about 177 A.D., thus writes—"For us who are called Christians you have not in like manner cared : but though we commit no wrong—nay, as will appear in the sequel of this discourse, are of all men most piously and righteously disposed towards the Deity and towards your government—you allow us to be harassed, plundered, and persecuted, the multitude making war on us for our Name alone. . . . But no name in and by itself is reckoned either good or bad : names appear good or bad according as the actions under-

lying them are bad or good. You, however, have yourselves a clear knowledge of this, since you are well instructed in philosophy and all learning. For this reason, too, those who are brought before you for trial, though they may be arraigned on the gravest charges, have no fear, because they know that you will inquire respecting their previous life, and not be influenced by names if they mean nothing, nor by the charges contained in the indictments if they should be false; they accept with equal satisfaction, as regards its fairness, the sentence, whether of condemnation or acquittal. What, therefore, is conceded as the common right of all, we claim for ourselves, that we shall not be hated or punished because we are called Christians (for what has the name to do with our being bad men?), but be tried on any charges which may be brought against us, and either be released on our disproving them, or punished if convicted of crime—not for the name (for no Christian is a bad man unless he falsely profess our doctrine), but for the wrong he has done" (*Plea of Athenagoras*, Clark's Translation, pp. 376-7).

Many other witnesses might be instanced, but these of themselves prove that Christians were persecuted for the Name. When did this begin? We can now answer the question with confidence, for recent investigation has cast a great deal of light on the matter. Thanks to Mommsen, the great historian of Rome, to Professor Ramsay of Aberdeen, and to Mr Hardy, and also to Bishop Lightfoot, we can say that this relation of the Roman State to the Christian Church dates from



the time of Nero. In this, as in many other instances, the Christian tradition has been verified and confirmed by scientific historical investigation. We have the correspondence between Pliny and Trajan, which casts a valuable light both on the character of the Christian community and on the relation it bore to the Roman Government.

Pliny writes to Trajan for instruction, as he had never been present at any trials of Christians, and did not know what he should inquire into, what should be punished, and what were the limits both of inquiry and of punishment. He tells that he asked them three distinct times whether they were Christians; and if they were obstinate, he ordered them to be executed. Some he had sent to Rome. Some who denied that they were Christians, and who offered incense and wine before the statue of the Emperor, he dismissed. Those who adhered to Christianity, said that they assembled periodically at dawn and sung a hymn to Christ as to a god, and bound themselves to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery, perjury, and dishonesty, after which they separated, meeting again for a common meal, which was open to all and innocent. Such is the substance of this unique letter. We venture to borrow the results of Professor Ramsay, set forth in his great work on "the Church in the Roman Empire," p. 223 :—"1. There was no express law or formal edict against the Christians in particular. 2. They were not prosecuted or punished for contravening any formal law of a wider character interpreted as applying to the Christians. 3. They were judged and

condemned by Pliny, with Trajan's full approval, by virtue of the *imperium* delegated to him, and in accordance with the instructions issued to governors of provinces to search out and punish sacrilegious persons, thieves, brigands, and kid-nappers. 4. They had before this been classed as outlaws, and enemies to the fundamental principles of society and government, of law and order, and the admission of the name Christian in itself entailed condemnation. 5. This treatment was accepted as a settled principle of the imperial policy, not established by the capricious action of a single Emperor. 6. While Trajan felt bound to carry out the established principle, his personal view was opposed to it, at least to such an extent that he advised Pliny to shut his eyes to the Christian offence, until his attention was expressly directed to an individual case by a formal accuser, who appeared openly to demand the interference of the imperial Government against a malefactor. 7. A definite form of procedure had established itself through use and wont."

We may refer also to Professor Ramsay's vindication of the historical trustworthiness of Tacitus. When Tacitus tells us that Christianity "had its origin from Christus, who, in the reign of Tiberius, had been executed by the procurator Pontius Pilate," he is speaking what is true. Tacitus furthermore is speaking what is historically true when he tells us of Nero's action with regard to the Christians. Professor Ramsay and Mr Hardy ("Christianity and the Roman Government") prove that Tacitus has given a true description of the historical situation

under Nero. Nero, to avert suspicion from himself, had charged the Christians with the crime of incendiarism. "The investigation, arising from a purely incidental charge, had made the Government for the first time acquainted, not with the name—for that was probably known before—but with some of the peculiarities of the sect, and though the numbers were not sufficiently great, nor the members of sufficient social importance to make it really a political danger, . . . yet the principles of the religion seemed to involve in the last resort political disobedience, the recognition of an authority which, in cases of collision with the State authority, was in preference to be obeyed" (Hardy, "Christianity and the Roman Government," pp. 73, 74). Nero established the principle which was to guide the action of the Roman Government. As the result of the trial the Christians were recognised as a body whose principles seemed to the authorities to be subversive of all the bonds which held society together.

The investigation carried out by Mommsen, Ramsay, Hardy, and others, has produced certain important facts already, and seems destined to add still more of lasting scientific and apologetic worth. For our present purpose we have called attention to it, because it enables us to see more clearly that within thirty years of the crucifixion of our Lord there existed a community who believed in Christ Jesus, who sought to live in accordance with His precepts and after His example. The life they lived was shaped according to the pattern set forth in the New Testament. Whether we consider the truth they believed, or the life they sought to live, we

have abundant evidence of the intense vitality and dominant influence of the New Testament standard of life. For our argument at the present moment we may neglect all inquiry into the question as to whether the documents of the New Testament were in existence at the time of Nero. For the life of the Christian community is moulded, shaped, fashioned after that type. And the type is found nowhere else in the history of mankind. Whether the New Testament was in existence as a writing or not, the spirit, aim, and tendency of it were already somehow embodied in the life of the Christian community.

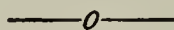
Take their relation to the State, and we find it to be something unique. The strange union of respect for the Government as an ordinance of God, to be honoured, obeyed, and revered, with the bold and unhesitating refusal to obey wheresoever it seemed to conflict with the commands of God, and to interfere with the reverence due to Christ, is something we do not find elsewhere in the history of the world, and it must be accounted for. Take the Christian relation between man and man, between Christian and Christian, and between a Christian and a Pagan, and the same remark applies. In fact, as we pass round all the circle of difference between the Christian and the Pagan ideal, we have the same reflection to make. What can have persuaded men to forsake all their ancient ideals, to reverse their former standards of worth and heroism, and to enter on a life which, on the one hand, led to suffering, shame, and death, and, on the other hand, seemed to them to be the only life worth living? and the answer is: The love of



Christ constraineth us. In this relation, take the following from Mr Gladstone's article in the *People's Pictorial Bible* :—

“The religion of Christ is for mankind the greatest of all phenomena, the greatest of all facts. It is the dominant religion of the inhabitants of this planet in at least two important respects. It commands the largest number of professing adherents. If we estimate the population of the globe at 1,400,000,000 (and some would state a higher figure), 400,000,000 or 500,000,000 of these, or one-third of the whole, are professing Christians ; and at every point of the circuit the question is not one of losing ground, but of gaining it. The fallacy which accepted the vast population of China as Buddhists in the mass has been exploded, and it is plain that no other religion approaches the numerical strength of Christianity ; doubtful, indeed, whether there be any which reaches one-half of it. The second of the particulars now under view is perhaps even more important. Christianity is the religion in the command of whose professors is lodged a proportion of power far exceeding its superiority of numbers, and this power is both moral and material. In the area of controversy it can hardly be said to have a serious antagonist. Force, secular or physical, is accumulated in the hands of Christians in a proportion absolutely overwhelming ; and the accumulation of influence is not less remarkable than that of force. This is not surprising, for all the elements of influence have their home within the Christian precinct. The art, the literature, the systematised industry, invention and commerce—

in one word the power, of the world are almost wholly Christian. In Christendom alone there seems to lie an inexhaustible energy of world-wide expansion. The nations of Christendom are everywhere arbiters of the fate of non-Christian nations."



## CHAPTER IX.

### CHRISTIANITY AND GREEK PHILOSOPHY.

Forces arrayed against Christianity—Dr Hatch—Ritschl and his School—Attempts to make Christianity a system of Ideas — The independent character of Christian Theology—Greek conceptions of God—Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics—Christian conception of God — Personality — Limits of Christian speculation — Relation of God to the World — Doctrine of Creation — Christian estimate of Man —The Future Life — In relation to their idea of God, of Man, and the World, there is a decided contrast between Christian and all Pagan Thought —The Problem set to Christian Theology.

AGAINST the progress of the New Society were arrayed the organised powers of the Roman Empire, the customs, manners, and ideals of a society penetrated through and through with the spirit of the Ancient Civilisations, hallowed by a sacred antiquity, and sanctioned by all those moral and religious associations which make life precious to men; the Christian Church had also to contend with

all the resources of the keenest and most subtle intelligence ever possessed by any race of man. Christianity had to make way against all the forces of organised government, of religion and morality, as these were then constituted, and against all the resources of Greek Philosophy. We still feel the power and grandeur of the Roman political and legal system, and Roman Law in particular has wielded, and still continues to wield, an immense influence, greater, perhaps, than we can well measure. It is not necessary to speak of Greek Philosophy, nor to say that it still continues almost to master us.

It has been contended that of the numerous elements which form the system of Christian theology, many are due to Roman Law and to Greek Philosophy. Indeed it is said that the larger part of the Christian Creed is from a Hellenistic source. Dr Hatch says, "The Sermon on the Mount is the promulgation of a new law of conduct: it assumes beliefs rather than formulates them: the theological conceptions which underlie it belong to the ethical rather than the speculative side of philosophy: metaphysics are wholly absent. The Nicene Creed is a statement partly of historical facts and partly of dogmatic inferences. The metaphysical terms which it contains would probably have been unintelligible to the first disciples: ethics have no place in it. The one belongs to a world of Syrian peasants, the other to a world of Greek philosophers" (*Hibbert Lectures*, pt. I.). On the one hand we have the school of Ritschl and men like Dr Hatch, who think that the Greek element has had

the main influence in the shaping of Christian life and the formation of Christian theology, and call on us to strip from Christianity the Greek garb, and go back to the merely ethical ; and on the other hand there are men who think the Greek element the most important, neglect the facts on which Christianity is based, or make them mere scaffolding for the upbuilding of the system of ideas which they find in Christianity.

The truth surely lies between. There is a Christian view of the universe, as there is also a Christian rule of conduct. Christianity has its own specific contribution to make as to the way in which men are to think of God, of the world, and of man. It must satisfy man's longing for truth, as well as man's desire for life and guidance. Even in the Sermon on the Mount we have more than Dr Hatch has found. We have for example Christ Jesus in it, the authority which He claims, the position He assumes, and the way in which He identified Himself with truth and righteousness. Then the New Testament has other writings, in which are set forth statements about God, and man, and the world, which are in their very nature theological and philosophical. If we substitute the Fourth Gospel for the Sermon on the Mount in Dr Hatch's antithesis, how would it read? Manifestly he could not say that the Fourth Gospel belongs to a world of Syrian peasants, the other to a world of Greek philosophers.

The Christian Church was bound to reflect on the Christian facts, and to understand their meaning if she could. In the Apostolic writings is contained



already the type after which she is bound to think and meditate. In her thinking she took a path of her own, and built up for herself a system of truth which in many ways forms a contrast to Greek philosophy. This great subject can be but slightly handled here, only the barest outline can be given. The Christian Church maintained a doctrine of God which is in decided contrast to anything we find in Greece. And this doctrine we are not disposed to yield up, either in deference to those who call on us to give up the attempt to prove any doctrine of God, and to be content with a purely regulative knowledge of Him, or in deference to those who call on us to be content with a doctrine of God which would strip Him of all personality and possibility of personal fellowship with men.

The basis of the Greek conception of the Divine is Pantheistic, and this was never overcome. Neither by Plato, nor by Aristotle, nor by the Stoics, was there any real approach to the Christian conception of God. As to Plato: "Thus we see that the process which is symbolised in the creation of the universe by the Artificer, is no mere arbitrary exercise of power; it is the fulfilment of an inflexible law. The Creator does not exist but in creating; or, to drop the metaphor, absolute thought does not really exist unless it is an object to itself. So then the Creator, in creating the world, creates himself; he is working out his own being. Considered as not creating, he has neither existence nor concrete meaning" (*The Timæus of Plato*, by Archer-Hind, pp. 40-41). The *Timæus* contains the highest thought of Plato on this great topic.

But even here the thought of God is removed far from the world of matter, and matter is regarded as essentially evil. Matter and spirit remain apart, and the ancient philosophers were unable to arrive at any satisfactory solution of the problem of the relation of God to the world.

Aristotle sought to remove God far from the world, and to place Him in solitary self-contemplation, the object of His own thought, the unmoved mover of all movement. For the essence of the Divine being must be set far above nature, and must specially be untouched by the mutations of earthly existence. The precise relation of the unmoved mover to that which is moved is not clear, and a further exposition of it is not possible here.

While Aristotle maintained the complete separation of God from the world, the Stoic philosophy went to the other extreme, and maintained the doctrine that God is completely merged in the world. God was identified with the world, and Stoicism tended to become more and more Pantheistic. There were various attempts at a compromise, or at a union of the two tendencies, but these we cannot enumerate. We may say, however, that the problem of the relation of God to the world is the main problem of thought in the ages immediately before and after the beginning of the Christian era. It rules the Alexandrian philosophy. It rules also the Neo-Platonist speculation from its beginning to its close. Neo-Platonism is an illustrious example of what Christianity might have become if it had been wholly dominated by Hellenistic influences.

What path did Christianity take amid all the entanglements of such speculations as these? Did it persevere its independence; and proceed on its own path towards a solution which was more adequate than the Greek? The thought of Christianity was neither Platonist, nor Aristotelian, nor Stoic. It was Christian. It held fast to the conception given to it that God was a Spiritual personality. It did not reach this thought by a process of philosophical research and speculative reasoning. To them it was a datum, not a conclusion. That there was a living God, the Creator of the universe, the Upholder of everything that is, the Redeemer of the world, was to them the fixed and sure ground of all thought and action. This was the living belief of the Christian community, and this faith was the mainstay of its power. This belief pervades the New Testament; it is defended by the Apologists of Christianity, and set forth by all the great thinkers of the early church. It is the fundamental postulate of Christian theology, and prescribes the limits of every Christian attempt to set forth a theory of the universe; and it is in striking contrast to the Hellenistic solution of the problems of the philosophy of religion.

It is here, too, that the Christian view of the world comes into conflict with the main systems of philosophy, ancient and modern. It is precisely in this question of personality that the great difference emerges. Hellenism sees in personality just what most philosophers see in it still, merely a limitation, and regards it as something which is characteristic only of finite beings. While they might speak of par-

ticular gods as personal, they kept it at a distance from the Supreme Being. To speak of the Supreme Being as personal would be, to them, to make Him finite, limited, and restricted.

To the living faith of Christianity the source and ground of all existence was a Supreme Personality. God was One who could speak to them, and to whom they could speak. They were conscious of fellowship with Him. And all speculation was limited by this fundamental article of belief. From this the main stream of Christian theology has never swerved, and here, therefore, we have a proof of the fact that Christian thought took a path of its own. It kept its faith in a Living Personal God, and made it the foundation of all its attempts to think out the problem of His relation to the world.

But God was not to the church a mere abstract unity. To them there were abiding distinctions in the God-head, and love took for them a more profound meaning, because love had its home in God before the universe began to be. To them God was Father, Son, Spirit, and the unity of God was something deeper than that of a self-thinking spirit.

Thus, too, the question of the immanence and transcendence of God took a new form, and the doctrine of the Incarnation helped men to see how God, whom the heaven of heavens could not contain, still dwelt with man on the earth. When the Creator took creaturehood unto Himself, there was revealed a way of final union between the Maker of the world and the worlds which He had made.

In the doctrine of Creation also we have a striking contrast to all modes of Greek thinking in this



relation. Creation is not emanation ; it is not the result of a self-sundering of the divine Substance ; it is not a necessary or inevitable action on the part of the Divine Being ; it is a voluntary work. In the work of Creation, as it is conceived by Christian thinkers, God is not working out His own Being, or moving into otherness to realise Himself. He makes a world for wise and gracious ends, ends which as yet a Christian does not fully understand. Thus Christianity maintains the distinction between God and the world, for the world is God's creation, made by Him, sustained by Him, and all the laws, processes, and results of the world are never removed from Him.

The contrast between Christianity and Greek modes of thought is conspicuous also in their estimate of man and his worth. Christianity, as a living religion, demands a personal relation to the Ground of the World, thought of as a Supreme Personality. And Christian thought has toiled in order to bring this relation into clear consciousness. It finds this relationship ideally set forth in the relation of the Eternal Son to the Eternal Father, and realised also in a measure in the thought that men are sons of God. The relation of sonship, however constituted, is the supreme expression of this demand of Christianity, and also of its satisfaction. It is the relation of persons to a person, and here again we advance beyond the thought of Greece. For in Greek thought personality was only the transient product of a life, which as a whole is impersonal. It is the essential feature of the Christian conception of the world to regard the person

and the relations of persons to one another as the very essence of reality. For to Christianity person-ality is permanent, and persists.

This leads us to another decided contrast between the Greek and Christian views of the world, a contrast which is far-reaching and has very wide issues. What is the mode of the future life? What are the elements of the beings who live the future life? Here, too, the distinctive Christian doctrine is, not that of the immortality of the soul, but that of the immortality of the whole organic being, body, soul, spirit, by whatever names we may call the various elements, the union of which make up man. In this respect, as in many others, there have been strenuous attempts to substitute Hellenism for Christianity, and to make Paul speak the language of Plato. The life and immortality brought to light by Christ is of a kind altogether different from any contemplated by pagan thought. For them matter was evil and vile, and the body was a prison-house. Their highest view of death was that it was a deliverance from the prison-house of the body. The Greek view of matter, as essentially evil, had important consequences on all their system of thought. It led to the attempt to isolate the Supreme Being from the world; it caused a hopeless dualism in the thought of the Greeks, whether that thought was directed towards God, or man, or the world. It led also to an insincere view of evil, and disabled the Greek mind in every attempt to grasp the real nature of sin. The Greek view lies at the basis of the attacks which are constantly made even nowadays to discredit the evidence of the Resurrection of our

Lord, and explains why so many are desirous of substituting the immortality of the soul for the resurrection of the dead.

But we may not dwell on these things. It is enough here to point out that with regard to the doctrine of God and of His relation to the world with regard to man, his present being and his future destiny, with regard to creation and providence, Christian thought took a path of its own. It was a difficult task it took in hand, a task which we also have in hand. To maintain the Christian verities, and yet to be ready to learn from Greece and Rome what they could teach them of truth, and life, and duty : to maintain a doctrine of God, which would conserve His transcendence over the world, His immanence in the world, and yet not identify Him with the world : to maintain abiding distinctions within the Godhead, and yet conserve the unity of the Godhead : to insist that love was the essential attribute of God, and yet to estimate rightly the guilt, the sinfulness, and the demerit of sin ; between these and other similar perplexities on the right hand and on the left Christian theology had to steer, and to work out a Christian view of the Universe.

If, in the working out of the Christian view, it sometimes pushed some elements into undue prominence and left others out of sight, if at one time some aspect was forced to the front to the neglect of others, it was ultimately brought back to the right path of development, or will yet be brought back to it. For Christian theology has for its rectification a divine corrective, as Christian life also

has set for it a Divine standard. In both, the New Testament has set the measure and the norm. It is the rule of our thinking as well as the guide of our life. There is more to be found in the New Testament than has yet been discovered by man. Its methods and its principles will be better understood by-and-by. Read in the light of the advancing thought of humanity it attains to greater and greater grandeur. The great objects of human thought God, and man, and the world are becoming ever greater as science and philosophy make progress. And Christianity welcomes light from every quarter. It is wonderful how the thought of the New Testament harmonises with the highest thought of man. In all the discussions about the Supreme Being, and in all the thought directed towards Him, it is surprising to find how the best and deepest thoughts agree with the thought of God set forth in the Scriptures. The study of man in all the aspects of his complex being, in his bodily structure, and in his mental being, is bringing us nearer to that estimate of him as a being of infinite worth which is implied in the New Testament. The study of nature has revealed to us a new world. The world is a new world for man since science has sent its illuminating torch into its wide and deep recesses. This knowledge which has increased by leaps and bounds, serves also to bring to light aspects of the revelation of God in Christ, which were hidden from men's eyes till the Key was put into their hands. What was first understood was that part of revelation necessary to healthy life and right conduct. But there is also a wider aspect of revelation,



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which discloses itself as men are made fit to receive it. So all gains of philosophy and all results of science are welcomed by Christianity, and are helpful to Christians to enable them to apprehend the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, of the great revelation of God entrusted to them.

THE END.



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